

Becoming “The Great Arsenal of Democracy”:
A Rhetorical Analysis of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Pre-War “Fireside Chats”

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We are like dwarfs standing upon the shoulders of giants, and so able to see more and see further . . .

- Bernard of Chartres

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To Jason,
for making memories of us

I can recall walking eastward on the Chicago Midway on a summer evening. The light held after nine o'clock, and the ground was covered with clover, more than a mile of green between Cottage Grove and Stony Island. The blight hadn't yet carried off the elms, and under them drivers had pulled over, parking bumper to bumper, and turned on their radios to hear Roosevelt. They had rolled down the windows and opened their car doors. Everywhere the same voice, its odd Eastern accent, which in anyone else would have irritated Midwesterners. You could follow without missing a single word as you strolled by. You felt joined to these unknown drivers, men and women smoking their cigarettes in silence, not so much considering the President's words as affirming the rightness of his tone and taking assurance from it. You had in some sense the weight of the troubles that made them so attentive, and of the ponderable fact, the one common element, on which so many unknowns could agree.

Saul Bellow, "In the Days of Mr. Roosevelt"

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

My friends . . . Let us sit down . . . together again,
you and I, to consider our own pressing problems that confront us.¹

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 26, 1940

On January 5, 1941, Mrs. Helen J. Quinn from Corning, New York, penned a letter to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in response to his “Fireside Chat” the week earlier. “Dear Sir,” she wrote, “I am just one of the common folks to whom you spoke last Sunday evening.” Mrs. Quinn explained that although she was the mother of three children, she “hardly read war news or listen[ed] to war talks on the radio [because] . . . if I assumed managership of this war along with my own personal worries I would soon suffer nervous collapse and not be of use to anyone.” She continued,

With this in mind I spun my [d]ial from station to station to tune out your speech. Wherever I tuned “there you were before me” so in spite of myself I listened and have been thankful ever since that I did. No ranting, no raving – no bullying, no bragging but logical, understandable facts, told in a calm, unruffled voice that carried conviction, confidence and courage right into my heart . . . I do feel that as long as . . . we have God-fearing men like yourself at the head of our country, willing to be guided by Him, we’ll never be hopelessly lost even though the going may be rough. I feel as though I have had a personal interview with you and I want to thank you for your Fireside Chat.²

In this short letter, Mrs. Quinn expressed how the majority of U.S. citizens felt about Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats.” In the comfort and safety of their own homes, the President of the United States spoke not just to them but *with* them, explaining the problems facing the nation and invoking a spirit of “confidence and courage” in his audience. Together, as a

unified nation, the people of the United States could face any crisis. “Together,” said the president, “we cannot fail.”³

This study analyzes the five “Fireside Chats”⁴ delivered by President Franklin D. Roosevelt between the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. This project considers these particular “Chats” to assess how they were designed to shift U.S. public opinion from isolationism to intervention in the Second World War by convincing the audience that sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to stay out of war with Germany. Although Roosevelt used multiple avenues of communication during this period, including addresses to Congress, press conferences, and other radio addresses, the friendly, communal nature of the “Fireside Chats,” as created by Roosevelt provided a unique opportunity for him to communicate directly to the U.S. public during a period of growing international crisis. This was not the first time Roosevelt used “Fireside Chats” to communicate to his audience during a national crisis. Eight days into his presidency, Roosevelt spoke directly to his audience in the midst of the banking crisis. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the president’s desire to “. . . to ‘explain clearly and in simple language to all of you just what has been achieved and the sound reasons which underlie this declaration to you.’”⁵ “The President said that the Constitution laid upon him the duty of reporting to Congress assembled in Washington the condition of the country,” an article in *The New York Times* read, “and he believed that he had a like duty to convey to the people themselves a clear picture of the situation.”⁶ Barely a week into his administration, Roosevelt bypassed traditional media outlets, press conferences, and newspaper reporters to speak directly to his constituency, the citizenry

whom he addressed as “my friends.”

Six and a half years later, on September 3, 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt sat down to give the fourteenth “Fireside Chat” of his presidency. Instead of focusing on domestic issues facing the nation, as previous “Chats” had, the president turned to the international realm. Germany had invaded Poland in an attempt to regain land lost under the 1918 Treaty of Versailles; in response, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany hours before Roosevelt spoke over the airwaves in the United States.⁷ “My countrymen and my friends,” Roosevelt began, “tonight my single duty is to speak to the whole of America.”⁸ Just days into a global crisis which would ultimately result in the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entry into World War II, Roosevelt again turned to the radio, a medium that allowed the president to speak directly to his audience, unencumbered by the press or his political opponents.

The central research question of this study asks how President Franklin D. Roosevelt used these “Fireside Chats” to appeal to his audience and convince them that sending military and economic aid to Great Britain was the surest way to keep out of war with Germany. What particular rhetorical devices did he use? How did he create his audience through these radio addresses? By constructing a personal, conversational rhetorical exchange between the president and the citizenry, how did Roosevelt use identification as a means of persuasion in these five “Chats”? How did Roosevelt use these strategies to respond to protests from prominent isolationist leaders and members of the America First Committee, including aviator Charles Lindbergh, prominent historian Charles Beard, newspaper magnate William Hearst, and U.S. senator Gerald P. Nye? To answer these

questions, this study argues that Roosevelt's rhetorical approach was one designed to appeal to the U.S. public's desires for two specific things: economic growth and stability at home, and freedom from international entanglements abroad. Although these two desires could be attributed to many periods in U.S. history, they are particularly applicable to a U.S. public who had survived the Great War and suffered through the more recent Great Depression. In September 1939, the vast majority of U.S. citizens believed that sending aid to Great Britain would undermine the great social and economic gains made by the United States during the New Deal. For a nation recovering from the greatest economic crisis in its history, the idea of sending precious military and economic resources to Great Britain seemed to many an overreaction to a war that did not concern the United States. In addition, because a vast majority of the voting public either remembered the Great War or heard first-hand accounts of its horrors, the idea of entering another European conflict, one which many believed would not impact the United States, was intervention of the worst possible kind. After the failure of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points after the Great War, the general public was hesitant to take any action that would lead to further international entanglements or, the worst-case scenario, war. This project aims to prove that President Roosevelt directly addressed these two specific fears and desires in his five "Fireside Chats" between September 1939 and December 1941, arguing that the surest way to guarantee both the economic growth and security of the United States at home and freedom from international entanglements abroad was to support Great Britain's struggle against Germany.

In the rest of this chapter, I provide a historical discussion of Roosevelt's "Fireside

Chats” as a means of persuasion and briefly describe the five texts which make up this study. I then detail the theoretical methods I use in this analysis, discuss relevant literature on the “Fireside Chats,” and explain how this project supplements current scholarship. The final section of this chapter provides an overview of the three content chapters and my conclusion.

Historical Background and Discussion of the Texts

The Rise of Radio⁹

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office in March of 1933, over seventeen million U.S. households owned a radio.¹⁰ Although there were only three million radio sets in the United States in 1924, that number increased to 30 million sets by 1936. By 1938, 91 percent of all urban households and 70 percent of all rural households owned at least one radio.¹¹ Robert J. Brown suggests that for many U.S. citizens, “the radio set became a highly valued and permanent piece of living room furniture, and an integral part of family life.”¹² In their 1929 study of a small U.S. town in the Midwest, Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd listed radio as “among the necessities in the family standard of living.”¹³ Families would gather around their set after dinner, listening to news programs, dramas, musical concerts, and the like. “Radio sets were not then very powerful,” Henry Fairlie reflected, “and there was always static. Families had to sit near the set, with someone always fiddling with the knobs. It was like sitting around a hearth, with someone poking the fire . . . it was we who were at our firesides.”¹⁴

In his pioneering study of the psychological impact of radio, Hadley Cantril reported

that the medium was

more personal than the printed word. A voice belongs to a living person, and living people arrest our attention and sustain our interest better than do printed words . . . a voice broadcasting news possesses an intimacy and eventfulness absent from the evening newspaper. If the voice is that of a well-known radio favorite, it seems friendly. We respond to it, and even obey its commands.¹⁵

The radio, Cantril said, made the world seem smaller as it connected listeners across the United States, making listeners from Boston, Dallas, Des Moines, and Sacramento feel connected to the speaker in a “novel way.”¹⁶ Radio also functioned as a “powerful agent of democracy,” Cantril said. “Millions of people listen to the same thing at the same time—and they themselves are aware of the fact.” Moreover, the radio minimized the differences; “rural and urban communities, men and women, age and youth, social classes, creeds, states, and nations are abolished.” These were replaced by a “consciousness of equality and a community of interest,” because when this vast audience heard the same messages over the radio, they acquired “in some degree common interests, common states, and common attitudes.”¹⁷ Published in 1935, the sentiments expressed in this study reflect how U.S. citizens in the 1930s and 1940s viewed radio’s impact on their social and political consciousness. It unified them, reaching across barriers of location and class. It encouraged them to take action. And, beginning in 1933, a friendly and confident voice came across the airwaves, connecting with his audience in a personal way and calmly addressing the problems of the Great Depression. That voice was Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Roosevelt and the Radio

Although Roosevelt gave approximately 300 radio addresses over the course of his presidency, he designated only twenty-seven as “Fireside Chats.”¹⁸ Roosevelt advisor and chief speechwriter Samuel Rosenman credited this to Roosevelt’s “acute sense of timing,” noting that the president wanted to preserve the rhetorical force and public appeal of the “Chats.” Roosevelt spaced them so that he would not “talk so frequently as to wear out his welcome in the homes of his listeners, but not so seldom as to lose the potentiality of the radio appeal.”¹⁹ He designed the “Chats” to speak to everyday Americans on an individual level, choosing words from among the “1,000 most common words in the English language.”²⁰ In a study of Roosevelt’s rate of speaking, Halford Ryan explained that the president “spoke slowly whether he addressed live audiences or used the radio.” Although “most orators talk at about 125-175 words per minute (wpm)...[and] in the sound environment of radio, a rate of 175-200 wpm is deemed suitable,” Roosevelt’s “rate for the Fireside Chats was about 30 percent slower than the optimum wpm for a radio broadcast.” This slow, deliberate style of speaking communicated “trust, competency, and tranquility at the helm of state.”²¹ Roosevelt’s ability to connect with his audience on a friendly, individual level contributed to the wide success of the “Fireside Chats” during the course of his presidency.

Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated the idea of speaking directly to “the people” over the radio during his term as governor of New York. Grace Tully, his personal secretary, recalled the time Roosevelt became “ensnarled with a recalcitrant legislature a year or so after becoming [g]overnor. Fed up with the pulling and hauling of customary political

bargaining, he declared curtly: ‘I’ll take the issue to the people.’” Mail flooded into the New York legislature in support of Roosevelt’s proposal. Going forward, Roosevelt took the same approach in communicating with the people of New York. He

considered radio presentation not an instrument of pressure but rather a way to sit down with the American public and discuss with them the issues which pertained to their own well-being. It was, again, a part of this feeling that the judgment of the people would be sound and that their confidence in their Government would be strengthened by an exposition of a situation presented to them initially in full. The editorializing and the opposition could follow, by whatever media chosen, but the President’s own case could thus be set forth by him and in his own words.²²

The quote above comes from Grace Tully, the president’s personal secretary, who worked with him on his “Fireside Chats” throughout his presidency. She reflects Roosevelt’s belief that the people deserved to hear facts about their “own well-being” directly from their president. So it was that in 1932, eight days into his presidency and during the worst economic crisis in the history of the United States, Roosevelt turned again to the radio as a way to speak directly to the U.S. citizenry.

To a nation weighed down by economic uncertainty, depression, hunger, and unemployment, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s radio address of March 12, 1933, was an immediate demonstration of the new president’s ability to lead. After introducing an emergency banking bill to the U.S. Congress which required banks gradually to open their doors again to the public, Roosevelt went on the air to explain his actions to the people of the United States. He adopted the tone of a patient teacher, beginning his address with an overview of the “banking and legal terms” which he stated “should be explained for the benefit of the average citizen.” He directly addressed the fears of his audience, responding to those “worrying about State banks not members of the Federal Reserve System” and questions

as to why all banks would not open on the same day around the country. Because frantic waves of bank withdrawals had directly contributed to the current crisis, he referred to money hoarding as “an exceedingly unfashionable pastime,” one driven by fear. After stating that banks would open on a rolling basis over the next several weeks, he told his audience that he expected their full cooperation in remedying this “bad banking situation.” He called for the “cooperation of the public,” stating that national “cooperation and courage are the essentials of success in carrying out our plan . . . it is up to you to support and make it work. Together,” Roosevelt concluded, “we cannot fail.”

Roosevelt articulated his expectation of his audience, calling forth a certain type of citizen who would return money to their individual bank, have faith in the government’s ability to slowly resolve the banking crisis, and maintain the “loyal support [they had] given [him] in their acceptance of the judgment that has dictated our course, even though all our processes may not have seemed clear to them.”²³ In the first “Fireside Chat” of his presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt clearly laid out the facts of the banking situation, identified and sympathized with the fear and uncertainty his audience was experiencing, and called for his audience to respond to the crisis with national unity, cooperation, and personal responsibility. This address also established a personal and direct form of communication with the public, one that set a precedent for how these particular addresses would function as a rhetorical device throughout his presidency.

The public response to Roosevelt’s March 12, 1933, “Chat” was overwhelmingly positive.²⁴ “The President of the greatest Nation on earth honored every home with a personal visit last night,” wrote Mr. and Mrs. F. B. Graham from Dubuque, Iowa, the day

after Roosevelt's address. "He came into our living-room in a kindly neighborly way and in simple words explained the great things he had done so that all of us unfamiliar with the technicalities might understand. When his voice died away we realized our 'friend' had gone home again but left us his courage, his faith and absolute confidence."²⁵ Mrs. Louise Hill from Chicago stated that Roosevelt's broadcast over the radio transformed "our little home [into] a church, our radio a pulpit—and you the preacher. Thank you for the courage and faith you have given us."²⁶ Some wrote of the physical closeness they felt to the president through his words. "It almost seemed the other night, sitting in my easy chair in the library, that you were across the room from me. A great many of my friends have said the same thing," remarked Mr. James A. Green from Cincinnati. Others expressed how Roosevelt encouraged them to feel as if they had a stake in the government. "Washington has seemed a long way off . . . Some how [sic], last night, we were made to feel that we are a part of the government and that we have some responsibility. That sense has been lacking on part of many of us who would have it otherwise."²⁷

For many, the new president spoke, for the first time, directly to the citizenry about their individual and personal problems. In the words of Mrs. Paul Russell from Haskell, Oklahoma, "In your ten minute radio talk Sunday Night you said more than Mr. Hoover did in four years, and although you have culture, aristocratic breeding and wealth you have one priceless gift, that of reaching out to the 'common people' with a deep sympathy and understanding, that goes into their hearts and you can talk their language and when you talked banking you talked banking so all could understand."²⁸ Finally, in a

short letter written three days after Roosevelt's radio address, Mr. John Watson from Reiffton, Pennsylvania, exclaimed, "Don't cut any fire for a long, long time. Think of having a President talk to us in our parlor. Thats great!!! good voice too [sic]."²⁹

These letters reflect how Roosevelt's first "Chat" immediately boosted the morale of the U.S. public. For the audience, it seemed as if President Roosevelt sat across from them just as a neighbor might. He identified with their concerns, addressed their fears, and explained his solution to their immediate problems. He called them to join together in national unity, to participate in their government as involved citizens, taking responsibility for the condition of the country and working with him towards a solution. Robert Sherwood, one of Roosevelt's speechwriters, described how Roosevelt's first "Fireside Chat" shifted the tone of presidential discourse:

Here was the first real demonstration of Roosevelt's superb ability to use the first persona plural and bring the people right into the White House with him. The very fact of a "chat" was in itself surprising and immeasurably stimulating: traditionally, when a president spoke to the people, it was an "Address," which might be intended as an exhortation, or an elaborate apologia, or a stern lecture. But Roosevelt spoke simply, casually, as a friend or relative, who had figured out a way to prevent foreclosure of the mortgage, and those of us who heard that speech will never forget the surge of confidence that his buoyant spirit evoked. It was all the more thrilling after the hair-shirted carping and petulance that we had been hearing from Hoover.³⁰

Beginning his first presidential "Fireside Chat" with the statement that he wanted "to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking," Roosevelt declared that he wished to talk *with* the citizenry, not to them.³¹ In direct contrast to Hoover, Roosevelt expressed his desire to communicate directly with the U.S. public. As Samuel Rosenman, advisor and chief speechwriter to Roosevelt, notes, the president saw

this method of communication as a way to convince his audience, individually and corporately, of the rightness of his approach to the economic situation.

[The “Fireside Chats” were a way for Roosevelt to talk] directly to the people of the nation—or rather to each person in the nation. The function of the fireside chat was to explain by the use of simple, everyday language and homely analogy the complex problems of government. He believed that if the people understood the facts, if they understood the reason behind a government action or policy, if they were taken into the confidence of their government and received a full and truthful statement of what was happening, they would generally choose the right course. And he felt it was part of his job of leadership to give them those facts. There lay the greatest source of the President’s strength. He was able to explain to the people the most intricate problems of government. He could do it by the use of simple language and by the clear, confident, and persuasive tone of his voice.³²

Here lay the strength of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s now-famous “Fireside Chats.” Through his friendly and relaxed tone, fatherly persona, and clear explanation of the facts facing the nation, Roosevelt made his audience, the entire nation, feel that he spoke to them individually and personally. He continued this practice throughout the Great Depression, talking with the U.S. people about issues such as the introduction of the New Deal in 1933, the Works Progress Administration in 1935, and the 1937 Unemployment Census.³³ Thus, when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and the international skies grew dark, Roosevelt turned again to this trusted medium of communication between himself and the people of the United States.

The Rhetorical Appeal of Roosevelt’s Pre-War “Fireside Chats”

As the onset of World War II in Europe forced the Roosevelt administration to shift its focus from domestic policies to the question of U.S. involvement in the growing international crisis, the content of Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats” changed as well. The

president gave five “Fireside Chats” between the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, in which he sought to explain the U.S. policy towards Nazi Germany and the Allied powers, particularly Great Britain. Although Roosevelt made many other speeches and radio addresses during this period, these “Chats” are of particular interest because they illustrate how the president attempted to condition the U.S. public to a gradual shift in U.S. foreign policy from isolationism to intervention.

These five particular radio addresses also indicate what Roosevelt viewed as watershed moments in the progression of U.S. policy towards the war in Europe. As noted previously, the president chose deliberate moments in public policy to address the U.S. public with a “Fireside Chat.” Most often, the timing corresponded to periods in which Roosevelt wanted to explain a certain course of action to the general public and, in the address, request their public support for such a policy. We see a similar pattern in the timing of these five “Fireside Chats” leading up to U.S. entry into World War II. In what follows, I briefly discuss the five “Fireside Chats” on which this study focuses and highlight major shifts in public opinion as a result of these radio addresses. My three content chapters will consider *how* Roosevelt accomplished these shifts through his rhetorical strategies; this section provides the historical background to understand just how powerful these shifts were in the pre-war U.S. public culture.

September 3, 1939: “On the European War”

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered his fourteenth “Fireside Chat” three hours after Great Britain and

France declared war on Germany.³⁴ In the speech, Roosevelt informed his audience that a proclamation of U.S. neutrality was being prepared towards the crisis erupting in Europe. However, Roosevelt declared that although the United States would “remain a neutral nation . . . I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or close his conscience.”³⁵ Roosevelt’s statement stood in stark contrast to Woodrow Wilson’s words at the beginning of the Great War. In 1914, Wilson called on the nation to be “impartial in thought as well as in action.”³⁶ Instead, Roosevelt cautioned his audience that although the United States would remain “a neutral nation,” the “simple but unalterable fact” was that “[w]hen peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger.”³⁷ In a Gallup Poll taken on August 30, 1939, almost eighty-four percent of respondents supported this proclamation of U.S. neutrality when they said that the United States should not send the “army or navy abroad to fight Germany.” However, fifty-eight percent of respondents agreed that the U.S. should sell airplanes and other war materials to England & France.”³⁸ Two weeks after Roosevelt’s speech, ninety-two percent affirmed that the U.S. should not send troops abroad and sixty-five percent stated that Great Britain and France should be allowed to purchase war materials from the United States.³⁹ The gradual rise in U.S. public support for allowing Great Britain and France to purchase airplanes and war materials from the United States was directly related to Roosevelt’s congressional attempts to repeal portions of the Neutrality Laws. On September 21, Roosevelt requested that restrictions on arms transfers between the United States and the Allied powers be lifted. Congress

passed a revised Neutrality Act which allowed Great Britain and France to pay cash for U.S. war materials and transport them with the use of their own ships (commonly referred to as “Cash-Carry”) on November 4, 1939.⁴⁰

May 26, 1940: “On National Defense”

After the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the “eery [sic] lull that settled over much of Europe . . . compounded Roosevelt’s problem in late 1939 and early 1940, as he faced the task of educating Americans about the real and present danger they faced.”⁴¹ Hitler sent “bogus peace feelers” to London and Paris.⁴² In December, English children who had been evacuated in September because of the threat of German air raids returned to their homes for Christmas. With little conflict apparent on the western front, one U.S. senator scoffed at the “Phony War” between Germany, France, and Great Britain.⁴³ After the winter thaw, however, Germany began attacks against Denmark, Norway, Holland, Luxembourg, and Belgium. On May 26, 1940, the president went on the air again to speak to the U.S. public in his fifteenth “Fireside Chat.” The German advance into Norway and Holland particularly concerned the United States since these nations controlled Iceland and Greenland, two territories which lay within the Western hemisphere.⁴⁴ In this “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt took the opportunity at “this moment of sadness throughout most of the world” to explain the military situation in the United States, responding directly to those isolationists calling the U.S. drastically unprepared to defend the nation against a German invasion.⁴⁵ In a lengthy enumeration of military numbers and statistics for the United States Army and Navy, Roosevelt called for a military appropriations bill to supplement the current U.S. military reserves: “In line with

my request the Congress, this week, is voting the largest appropriation ever asked by the Army or the Navy in peacetime.”⁴⁶ Highlighting the “public-government partnership that had worked so well in addressing the problems of the Great Depression,” Roosevelt declared it the resolve of himself and his audience to take action to “meet the present emergency.”⁴⁷ Three days before Roosevelt delivered the “Fireside Chat,” sixty-three percent of Gallup respondents said it was more important to keep the United States out of the war instead of helping England and France win against Germany.⁴⁸ A public opinion poll administered three days after the “Chat” demonstrated how the citizenry responded to the president’s speech. Ninety percent of survey participants supported an increase in U.S. military personnel and weaponry and eighty-six percent said that a billion dollars should be appropriated for the military. Shortly after the address, Congress approved \$1.6 billion appropriation for defense spending.⁴⁹ However, the public did not agree on whether the nation should provide military weaponry to the Allied forces. The same poll asked respondents if the United States should sell all, some, or none of the 5,000 airplanes currently in U.S. reserves to the French and British. Eight percent said all, forty percent supported selling some airplanes, and forty-seven percent said that no planes should be sold in any circumstance.⁵⁰

December 29, 1940: “On National Security”

Between his “Fireside Chat” of May 26, 1940, and his December 29, 1940, radio address announcing Lend-Lease to the U.S. public, Franklin D. Roosevelt decided to run for an unprecedented third term as President of the United States. All other U.S. presidents had followed George Washington’s example; none had ever attempted to

achieve the office more than twice.⁵¹ However, Roosevelt did not directly announce his candidacy to the U.S. public; instead, he waited for the Democratic Party to nominate him at the national convention in July 1940.⁵² In his acceptance speech, the president declared that he had a “clear duty . . . to preserve our neutrality, to shape our program of defense, to meet rapid changes, to keep our domestic affairs adjusted to shifting world conditions, and sustain the policy of the Good Neighbor.” Although he had had intentions of retiring from public life, Roosevelt explained that his “obvious duty to maintain to the utmost the influence of this mighty nation in our effort to prevent the spread of war” compelled him to postpone “personal plans” and accept the nomination if conferred by the Democratic National Convention.⁵³

The Republican nominee for president, corporate lawyer Wendell Willkie, openly supported a repeal of the Neutrality Laws and supplying Great Britain with economic aid and military weaponry to fend off the Germans.⁵⁴ Roosevelt was more careful, deeply conscious of U.S. public opinion and the citizenry’s desire to stay out of the war. Although most of the U.S. public supported building up U.S. military reserves for the national defense, a vast majority did not approve of supplying Great Britain and France with weapons of war. However, as the Allied situation worsened during the fall of 1940, Roosevelt grew more convinced that sending U.S. aid to Great Britain would be the only way to keep the United States out of eventual war with Germany. According to Robert Sherwood, one of Roosevelt’s speechwriters, the fall of France in June 1940 left Roosevelt certain “that if Britain fell[,] disastrous war for the United States would be inevitable” with Germany.⁵⁵ On July 10, Roosevelt requested an additional \$4 billion

dollars from the U.S. Congress for defense purposes. Just over a week later, Roosevelt initiated the first peacetime draft in U.S. history. When a reporter advised Republican presidential candidate Wendell Willkie that “if you want to win the election you will come out against the proposed draft,” Willkie replied, “I would rather not win the election than do that.”⁵⁶ The bill passed the U.S. Congress on September 16, 1940, with support from both presidential candidates, and on November 1, 1.2 million new enlistees and 800,000 reservists reported for military service.⁵⁷

Although still maintaining an official position of neutrality in the European war, these actions indicated Roosevelt’s growing fear that the United States would eventually become involved in the conflict. Two months before the presidential election, Roosevelt traded fifty World War I naval destroyers to Great Britain in exchange for the right to use air fields and naval bases in the Caribbean and western Atlantic for ninety-nine years.⁵⁸ Roosevelt completed the transfer by executive order, completely bypassing Congressional authorization of the deal.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the German Luftwaffe carried out daily air strikes over the skies of Great Britain; from September 7 to November 13, the Luftwaffe sent approximately 300 to 600 bombers over London each day. In September 1940, the German air strikes claimed the lives of almost 7,000 British civilians; in October, the number was 6,334.⁶⁰ Not only were the British suffering death and widespread injury as a result of these attacks, but their cash reserves also were quickly running out.

As Roosevelt searched for ways to assist Great Britain in its fight against Nazi Germany and the 1940 presidential contest between Roosevelt and Willkie neared, a

group of U.S. politicians, businessmen, public intellectuals, newspaper owners, and several former military officials formed the America First Committee in September 1940.⁶¹ Prominent members of America First included aviator Charles Lindbergh, newspaper magnate William Hearst, prominent historian Charles Beard, U.S. Senators Burton Wheeler (R-MT), Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), Richard LaFollette (Progressive-WI), Gerald P. Nye (R-ND), and U.S. Representative Hamilton Fish (R-NY).⁶² National membership in the committee was at least 800,000; other estimates place the figure at 1.2 million.⁶³ The America First Committee said that Roosevelt's desire to send aid to Great Britain would lead to U.S. involvement in World War II. Instead, the committee argued that the nation should focus on strengthening its own military and economy. Some even said that the United States should encourage Great Britain to make peace with Germany. From its creation in September 1940 to its disbandment after Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the America First Committee was the most outspoken opponent of Roosevelt's policies. The rhetoric of the movement will be discussed in the third chapter of this project.

On November 5, 1940, the U.S. public reelected Roosevelt to a third term as President of the United States. He won 54.7 percent of the popular vote and 447 electoral votes to Willkie's 44.8 percent and 82 electoral votes.⁶⁴ Roosevelt saw his victory over Willkie as an expression of the citizenry's confidence in his ability to lead the nation through both domestic and international crises, and he used this mandate to introduce his Lend-Lease plan to the U.S. public. Although Roosevelt had sent fifty destroyers to Great Britain in September, the British military needed airplanes, tanks, guns,

ammunition, and other military supplies to guarantee its survival. In a “remarkable 4,000-word letter,” Winston Churchill laid out the desperate situation in Great Britain, pleading for the United States to come to the aid of her democratic ally.⁶⁵ “The moment approaches when we shall no longer be able to pay cash for shipping and other supplies,” he wrote, and if “after victory was won with our blood, civilisation [sic] saved, and time gained for the United States to be fully armed against all eventualities, we should stand stripped to the bone. Such a course would not be in the moral or economic interests of either of our countries.”⁶⁶

In response to Churchill’s request for help, Roosevelt came up with the idea of “Lend-Lease.” In a press conference on December 17, 1940, Roosevelt explained his plan:

Suppose my neighbor’s home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose four or five hundred feet away. If he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don’t say to him before that operation, “Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it.” What is the transaction that goes on? I don’t want \$15 – I want my garden hose back after the fire is over. All right. If it goes through the fire all right, intact, without any damage to it, he gives it back to me and thanks me very much for the use of it. But suppose it gets smashed up – holes in it – during the fire; we don’t have to have too much formality about it, but I say to him, “I was glad to lend you that hose; I see I can’t use it any more, it’s all smashed up.” He says, “How many feet of it were there?” I tell him, “There were 150 feet of it.” He says, “All right, I will replace it.” Now, if I get a nice garden hose back, I am in pretty good shape.⁶⁷

Through this simple metaphor, Halford Ryan states that Roosevelt “successfully personalized America’s relationship to England in its time of trouble. It was not repudiated but rather acclaimed as one of FDR’s most successful subterfuges.”⁶⁸ Two weeks later, Roosevelt took to the airwaves to deliver his sixteenth “Fireside Chat” in

order to persuade the U.S. public of his plan for Lend-Lease. Clearly stating at the outset of the address that this was not a “fireside chat on war” but one on “national security,” Roosevelt communicated his belief in the absolute necessity of sending military aid to Great Britain:

I make the direct statement to the American people that there is far less chance of the United States getting into war if we do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis than if we acquiesce in their defeat, submit tamely to an Axis victory, and wait our turn to be the object of attack in another war later on.

Roosevelt acknowledged that there would be “risk in any course we may take,” but expressed his confidence “that the great majority of our people agree that the course that I advocate involves the least risk now and the greatest hope for world peace in the future.” He argued that the United States must supply the “implements of war, the planes, the tanks, the guns, the freighters which will enable [the British] to fight for their liberty and for our security . . . so that we and our children will be saved the agony and suffering of war which others have had to endure.” In his peroration, Roosevelt proclaimed, “We must be the great arsenal of democracy.”⁶⁹

The Gallup Poll administered a survey two days after Roosevelt’s address. The first question asked whether or not the respondent had listened to the President’s speech. Fifty-eight percent responded that they had, and another sixteen percent indicated they had read about it in the newspaper. In response to the survey’s second question, which inquired if the respondent agreed with Roosevelt’s proposal, seventy-nine percent said they were in favor of Lend-Lease. In seven months, the number of U.S. citizens who supported not just selling but even lending military armaments to the British had

doubled.⁷⁰ On February 8, 1941, the U.S. House passed the Lend-Lease Act 250-167; one month later, the Senate passed it 60-31. The bill authorized the lease of U.S. military ships, airplanes, tanks, guns, and other supplies and also appropriated \$7 billion dollars to implement the plan.⁷¹

May 27, 1941: “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency”

Five months after Roosevelt introduced the Lend-Lease Bill (H.R. 1776) to the U.S. Congress and the public, the president used his May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat” to declare a state of “unlimited national emergency.” Speaking to a large audience of ambassadors and ministers representing all nations of the Western Hemisphere, Roosevelt addressed the immediate audience and the millions listening around the world as “My fellow Americans of all the Americas; My Friends.”⁷² In the “Chat,” Roosevelt detailed the alarming number of instances in which German submarines had torpedoed and sunk merchant ships carrying supplies to Great Britain over the last five months. At present, the president stated, the “rate of Nazi sinkings of merchant ships is more than three times as high as the capacity of British shipyards to replace them; it is more than twice the combined British and American output of merchant ships today.”⁷³ Indeed, the situation was alarming. Between January and May, 1941, German U-boats and surface raiders sank almost “two million tons of American and Allied merchant shipping, along with inestimable quantities of beef, butter, wheat, rubber, oil and military equipment needed by Britain.”⁷⁴ In response to these attacks, Roosevelt asserted the “freedom of the seas” and extended the neutrality zone in U.S. waters to the mid-Atlantic.⁷⁵ He vaguely alluded to an increase in U.S. military support for delivery of supplies, stating that “[a]ll

additional measures necessary to deliver the goods will be taken.”⁷⁶ According to Samuel Rosenman, the two main goals of the speech were to explain to the U.S. public “the facts that made necessary the declaration of an unlimited emergency, and the drastic measures such an emergency required. It was also a detailed argument which sought to convince the American people . . . that their very safety depended upon these drastic steps.”⁷⁷ As Rosenman indicated, the public responded favorably to Roosevelt’s declaration of “unlimited national emergency.” Two days after the “Chat,” on May 29, Gallup asked respondents which was more important: keeping the U.S. out of war or helping Britain, even if that aid meant the U.S. would become involved in the war. Fifty-nine percent said it was of utmost importance to continue aiding Britain in her fight against Germany. When asked if U.S. warships should accompany supply convoys to Great Britain, fifty-nine percent agreed and thirty-four percent said they should not. In the same survey, when asked if the United States should enter the war, sixty-seven percent said no.⁷⁸ Thus, although a majority of the U.S. public supported aid to the British, citizens vocally opposed entering the war with Germany and Italy.

During the summer of 1941, Roosevelt continued to escalate U.S. involvement in the war, even though the nation was not directly involved in the conflict. When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June, the president froze all German financial assets in the United States. In July, the U.S. military established a presence on Greenland and Iceland.⁷⁹ In August, the U.S. Congress barely passed the reauthorization of the Selective Service Act. Just four months before Pearl Harbor, Republicans argued that the defense situation was better than the previous year and deemed the renewal unnecessary. The bill

passed by a single vote in the House, and this “perilously thin margin in the House vote provided a sobering reminder of the nation’s continuing reluctance to move to a full war footing.”⁸⁰ We see this reluctance not only from the U.S. public, but from Roosevelt himself.

Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes noted that the president seemed to be “waiting for the Germans to create an ‘incident.’” In response to advisors who urged him to use the German sinkings of merchant ships to escalate U.S. involvement, Roosevelt replied, “I am not willing to take the first shot.” Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau recorded Roosevelt as saying, “I want to be pushed into this situation.”⁸¹ Upon the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary: “It is a problem whether this country has it in itself to meet such an emergency. Whether we are really powerful enough and sincere enough and devoted enough to meet the Germans is getting to be more and more of a real problem.” The following day, Stimson wrote to the president, suggesting that the U.S. declare war on Germany and included a draft of a war message to Congress.⁸² However, according to Lawrence Levine and Cornelia Levine,

FDR had not yet crossed that bridge. He still had not given up the hope that he could help England withstand the Germany juggernaut short of entering the war. This is what accounts for his indecision, for his contradictory statements and actions. It was not really, as he blurted out in front of several advisers, that he feared impeachment; it was that he feared being wrong, feared leading the American people into bloody strife if he could find another path. He also feared getting too far ahead of public opinion as he had in the Court fight . . . Although he has been accused by historians and politicians of maneuvering the United States into war, he was not so much Machiavellian as uncertain.⁸³

Although Roosevelt had several opportunities to declare war on Germany after submarine

sinkings of U.S. merchant ships, he did not. However, the U.S.S. *Greer* incident in early September 1941 provided the president the opportunity to speak again on the “freedom of the seas” and introduce his “shoot on sight” policy in the Atlantic.

September 11, 1941: “On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas”

On September 4, 1941, the U.S.S. *Greer* was en route to Iceland for a routine mail and supplies delivery mission to Iceland. While patrolling the area, a British air reconnaissance plane spotted a submerged German U-boat and notified the U.S.S. *Greer* of its existence. In response, the U.S.S. *Greer* located and tracked the submarine for several hours and reported its location to a British bomber. The bomber dropped four depth charges into the ocean, but missed the submarine completely. Assuming that the U.S.S. *Greer* was the vessel that had released the charges, the German U-boat fired torpedoes on the U.S. destroyer. The U.S.S. *Greer* responded by releasing eight depth charges of its own. Although neither the U.S.S. *Greer* nor the British bomber suffered damages, Roosevelt chose to use this particular incident to his advantage.⁸⁴

In his “Fireside Chat” of September 11, 1941, Roosevelt misrepresented the actual events surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* incident. Roosevelt described the U.S.S. *Greer* as “proceeding in full daylight towards Iceland . . . carrying American mail to Iceland. She was flying the American flag. Her identity as an American ship was unmistakable.” He continued,

She was then and there attacked by a submarine. Germany admits that it was a German submarine. The submarine deliberately fired a torpedo at the GREER, followed later by another torpedo attack. In spite of what Hitler’s propaganda bureau has invented, and in spite of what any American obstructionist organization may prefer to believe, I tell you the

blunt fact that the German submarine fired first upon this American destroyer without warning, and with deliberate design to sink her.

What Roosevelt failed to mention in his description was the British bomber who first fired on the German submarine. Instead of revealing how the British had provoked the U-boat, the president instead described the event as an indication of “indiscriminate violence against any vessel sailing the seas,” calling it an act of “piracy – piracy legally and morally.” This incident was more than a “mere episode in a struggle between two nations. This was one determined step towards creating a permanent world system based on force, on terror and on murder.” After relaying the U.S.S. *Greer* incident to the U.S. public, Roosevelt went on to describe other instances of German U-boat attacks on merchant ships, including the U.S.S. *Robin Moor*, the *S. S. Sessa*, and the U.S.S. *Steel Seafarer*. It would be “unworthy of a great nation to exaggerate an isolated incident, or to become inflamed by some one act of violence. But it would be inexcusable folly to minimize such incidents in the face of evidence which makes it clear that the incident is not isolated, but is part of a general plan.” The Nazi intent, said Roosevelt, was to “seize control of the oceans.” In response, Roosevelt set forth what would be called the “shoot on sight” policy:

This is the time for prevention of attack. If submarines or raiders attack in distant waters, they can attack equally well within sight of our own shores. Their very presence in any waters which America deems vital to its defense constitutes an attack.

In the waters which we deem necessary for our defense, American naval vessels and American planes will no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow – first.

Upon our naval and air patrol – now operating in large number over a vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean – falls the duty of maintaining the American policy of freedom of the seas – now. That means, very simply, very clearly, that our patrolling vessels and planes will protect all merchant ships – not only American ships but ships of any flag – engaged in commerce in our defensive waters. They will protect them from submarines; they will protect them from surface raiders.⁸⁵

From this point forward, Roosevelt ordered all U.S. ships and airplanes to open fire on any German or Italian vessel encountered while delivering supplies to Great Britain or other U.S. military posts. “With Roosevelt’s words,” wrote British historian Martin Gilbert, “an undeclared state of war existed between the United States and Germany in the North Atlantic.”⁸⁶

Roosevelt’s intentional misrepresentation of the U.S.S. *Greer* incident demonstrates his willingness to bend the truth so as to move the United States closer to war with Germany, and it is this specific choice just three months before Pearl Harbor that has left historians questioning the president’s motives during this period. According to Robert Dallek, Roosevelt’s manipulation of the facts “created a precedent for the manipulation of public opinion” and a future legacy of deception “that would be both emulated and abhorred.”⁸⁷ Moreover, Robert Brown explains that because of Roosevelt’s actions during this incident, “many members of Congress were incredulous when he reported the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor a few months later . . . In the House, one representative who voted against a declaration of war, Jeanette Rankin, warned: ‘This might be another Roosevelt trick. How do we know Hawaii has been bombed? Remember the Kerney [Greer]!’”⁸⁸ In the Senate, isolationists and members of the America First Committee led a congressional inquiry that revealed Roosevelt’s

distortions of the incident, but “neither a congressional nor a national majority demanded a change in policy.”⁸⁹

Interestingly enough, Samuel Rosenman, one of the three speechwriters who crafted this address, says nothing in his memoirs of the strategic misrepresentation set forth in the “Chat.” Instead, he simply commented on Roosevelt’s strategy during this period:

He was determined, as he had said in his September 11 speech, that incidents like the Greer should not provoke us into war; but he was as equally determined that we should shoot it out with the Germans if that was necessary to get the goods to England and Russia . . . [Roosevelt’s strategy was] to keep one step ahead of public opinion, not to be stampeded in one direction or the other, and to encourage full debate before taking too drastic action.⁹⁰

In a Gallup Poll taken six days after Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chat,” public opinion indicated once again that the majority of the U.S. public supported the president.

Responding to a question that asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed with having the U.S. navy “shoot German submarines or warships on sight,” sixty-one percent agreed and twenty-eight percent disagreed. Sixty-five percent of respondents said they agreed with the way Roosevelt was handling foreign policy. And yet, when asked whether the United States should enter the war against Germany, seventy-three percent said no.⁹¹

Franklin D. Roosevelt would not deliver another “Fireside Chat” until December 9, 1941, two days after Pearl Harbor. Shocked by Japan’s deliberate attack on the U.S. military base in Hawaii, the U.S. public expressed their support for the president when almost 97 percent of survey respondents approved of the United States’ declaration of war against Japan.⁹² According to Samuel Rosenman,

[t]hat sneak attack did our fleet the greatest damage in its history. But it did something else. It did something that the Nazis and the Japanese should have feared more than the American fleet and the British fleet combined—it created a unified, outraged and determined America. The dictators of the world could not have made a more serious blunder in their plans for world conquest than they did on that peaceful Sunday morning.⁹³

For over two years, Roosevelt had sought to unify the U.S. public through his “Fireside Chats” and help them understand the enormous danger Germany posed to the safety and security of the United States. Although he was successful at slowly shifting public opinion towards sending U.S. military and economic aid to Great Britain, Pearl Harbor ultimately convinced the U.S. citizenry of the necessity of going to war against Germany, Italy, and Japan.

Theoretical Methods and Literature

For the purposes of this project, I examine these five “Fireside Chats” as a body of rhetoric rather than discussing them individually. I make this choice for several reasons. Considering these five radio addresses as a whole allows me to discuss Roosevelt’s rhetorical strategies towards the mass U.S. public from 1939 to 1941. Primarily, I discuss how he attempted to persuade his audience that sending military and economic aid to Great Britain was essential to keeping the United States out of war with Germany. In these five “Fireside Chats,” Roosevelt appealed to two specific priorities his audience shared: their desire for domestic and economic security and their aversion to any U.S. involvement in the European war. As such, I consider how Roosevelt addressed these desires throughout these five “Fireside Chats” in an attempt to move his audience from strict isolationism to supporting his plan to send U.S. aid to Great Britain. In the

section above, I provided a historical overview of the situations and events to which Roosevelt responded in these “Fireside Chats.” In the chapters that follow, I consider how Roosevelt structured these addresses to identify with his audience, remind them of their past shared struggles, call them to civic duty and a specific type of citizenship, and encourage them to make specific types of sacrifice for the good of their nation. I draw upon several theoretical methods and bodies of literature to do this.

First and foremost, I rely on close textual analysis to discuss how Roosevelt presented his argument that sending U.S. aid to Great Britain was the best way to avoid war with Germany in these five “Fireside Chats.” I consider his use of metaphor and how he enabled his audience to visualize what he was talking about over the radio. I examine Roosevelt’s tone, persona, and the evidence and strategies he used to support his argument and thus persuade his audience. To assess Roosevelt’s success as a rhetorician, I draw upon Lawrence and Cornelia Levine’s helpful work *The People and the President: America’s Conversation with FDR*, a compilation of letters written to Roosevelt from citizens across the nation in response to his “Fireside Chats.” These letters provide a very human answer to the question of how these “Chats” impacted and persuaded his audience. I combine these letters with public opinion polls administered during this period to paint a picture of what the broad U.S. public thought of Roosevelt’s policies and his attempt to convince his audience of the necessity of sending military and economic aid to Great Britain.

I draw upon three specific theoretical models to discuss Roosevelt’s means of persuasion in these “Fireside Chats.” First, I utilize several articles published on the

relationship between a rhetor and his/her audience to discuss Roosevelt's attempt to create a certain type of citizenry through his "Fireside Chats." In his influential article "The Second Persona," Edwin Black argues that auditors of a particular speech act "look to the discourse they are attending for cues that tell them how they are to view the world."⁹⁴ In discourse, the audience "find[s] enticements not simply to believe something, but to *be* something. [They] are solicited by the discourse to fulfill its blandishments with our very selves. And it is this dimension of rhetorical discourse that leads us finally to moral judgment." In his "Fireside Chats" from 1939 to 1941, Roosevelt called on his listeners to *be* and to *become* an active, involved, united, and supportive audience. As he described the international events which threatened Great Britain (and ultimately, he argued, the United States), Roosevelt invited his audience to view the world a certain way and respond to it. Walter J. Ong explains that a writer constitutes a "well-marked role" for his/her reader to play, one which draws upon the reader's sympathies, imaginations, and personal connection with the writer.⁹⁵ Roosevelt communicated this "well-marked role" in these five "Fireside Chats," explaining how international events impacted the domestic sphere and expressing confidence that his audience would respond with courage, duty, and patriotism. Finally, Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford differentiate between the idea of an audience addressed (the "concrete reality" of a certain audience) and an audience invoked (the audience a writer/speaker constructs within the discourse, a "created fiction").⁹⁶ They ultimately argue that the audience of any discourse must refer "not just to the intended, actual, or eventual readers of a discourse, but to *all* those whose image, ideas, or actions influence a writer during

the process of composition.”⁹⁷ For the purposes of this project, I consider Ong’s and Ede and Lunsford’s insights as they relate to the audience of a particular speech act or body of discourse. As such, I argue that one of Roosevelt’s major successes in these “Chats” is his ability to create, move, and sustain a certain type of audience through his rhetoric.

Second, I consider Kenneth Burke’s view of identification as a means of persuasion. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke argues that a speaker persuades by “causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker’s interests; and the speaker draws on the identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience.”⁹⁸ These shared interests function as a type of rhetoric, because “the ideas are so related that they have in them, either explicitly or implicitly, inducements to some social and political choices rather than others.”⁹⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt consistently used his identification with the audience, and how the audience identified with one another, to move them to action. He reminded them of shared U.S. values and morals, past struggles they confronted and conquered together, and the desire he and his audience shared to “keep out of this war.”¹⁰⁰ In doing so, he attempted to create a unified audience that would support his plan of sending aid to Great Britain.

Finally, I draw upon Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s work on presidential rhetoric, and in particular, their discussion of what constitutes presidential war rhetoric. In their book, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words*, Campbell and Jamieson provide five criteria that characterize all texts of presidential war rhetoric.¹⁰¹

[P]residential war rhetoric throughout U.S. history manifests five pivotal characteristics: (1) every element in it proclaims that the momentous

decision to resort force is deliberate, the product of thoughtful consideration; (2) forceful intervention is justified through a chronicle or narrative from which argumentative claims are drawn; (3) the audience is exhorted to unanimity of purpose and total commitment; (4) the rhetoric not only justifies the use of force, but also seeks to legitimize presidential assumption of the extraordinary powers of commander in chief; and, as a function of these other characteristics, (5) strategic misrepresentations play an unusually significant role in its appeals.¹⁰²

Roosevelt's final pre-war "Fireside Chat" of September 11, 1941, displays all five elements. I use this framework to discuss how the president justified his "shoot on sight" policy in the Atlantic Ocean by declaring it a product of careful deliberation, providing a narrative chronicle of incidents leading up to the incident, calling on the citizenry to support this new policy, assuming the powers of commander in chief, and strategically misrepresenting the facts of the U.S.S. *Greer*'s encounter with the German submarine.

Current Scholarship on the "Fireside Chats"

Numerous works have been written on Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and a number of scholars have focused their work on Roosevelt's rhetorical appeal to the U.S. public during his presidency. Some have focused on a specific "Fireside Chat" or a combination of the "Chats." In his examination of Roosevelt's first "Fireside Chat" on the national banking crisis, Amos Kiewe details how the "simple and direct speaking style aiding the straightforward message was all Roosevelt needed to appeal to most Americans, who absorbed every word, every syllable and intonation." Kiewe explores how the wide success of this first "Chat" ingratiated Roosevelt with the U.S. electorate, explaining that "the American people appreciated their leader's trust in them; they gave him their complete trust in return."¹⁰³ Keiko Aoki's brief analysis of FDR's December 9, 1941

“Fireside Chat” details how the president used clear, simple language, concrete examples, clear organization of the text, the use of the pronoun “we,” and a gradual shift from “soft” to “hard” language to persuade his listeners.¹⁰⁴ Applying the theory of media events to Roosevelt’s first eight “Fireside Chats,” David Michael Ryfe argues that the president shaped these specific addresses around a “new mode of publicness initiated by the culture industries of the 20th century,” determined to use the radio to create a relationship with his constituency that transcended time and space.¹⁰⁵

Others have discussed the “Fireside Chats” as a body of rhetoric. In an essay published in *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* in 2003, Elvin T. Lim argues that Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats” should not be described as an “intimate rhetorical genre” because Roosevelt’s word choice in the “Fireside Chats” was not “on the orator’s inmost thoughts nor directed at subject matter that was conducive to establishing an emotional or social rapport between speaker and audience.”¹⁰⁶ Lim also claims that the “declamatory statements” in the “Chats” against Hitler or even isolationists do not provide an intimate form of communication because they position the speaker in a position of moral authority versus maintaining equal footing with the audience.¹⁰⁷ Although Roosevelt did not share intimate personal details of his life or thoughts, the “Fireside Chats” did establish a friendly, personal, direct means of communication between himself and the U.S. public. The president spoke to millions over the radio, but members of the audience frequently remarked that they felt he was speaking directly to them. Roosevelt believed he had a duty to the U.S. public to report the actions of the U.S. government, giving an account for certain policies and actions just as he was required to report to the U.S. Congress. As a

result, Roosevelt's audience felt trusted, confided in, and personally informed of the domestic and international affairs of the state.

In their collection of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats," historians Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy discuss how Franklin Roosevelt's audience looked to him to provide an indication of what they, as a nationally unified audience, were fighting against, whether the Great Depression at home or a growing German threat abroad. They explain that Roosevelt often sought to unite the audience "by calling attention to some enemy, some small minority of the perverse or wrongheaded, whose pernicious ideas the rest of us had to resist at all costs." These attempts to find and name "an enemy signaled to average Americans what attitudes and actions were unpatriotic; but the device also served the larger purpose of instilling in listeners feelings of unity with the vast majority of their fellow citizens."¹⁰⁸

Other scholars have considered Roosevelt's skill as a rhetorician. In *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency*, Halford R. Ryan charts the rhetorical strategies used by Roosevelt during various domestic and international crises of his presidency, noting that Roosevelt's use of the radio had a greater impact on the broad U.S. public than individual speeches to certain groups. Although he was not the first president to speak to the nation over radio, Ryan argues that "he was the first one to realize its potential for persuading the mass audience by extending his voice into the living rooms of the nation."¹⁰⁹ Ryan details the specific rhetorical strategies of the various "Chats," noting that they covered various types of presidential rhetoric, including national "pep talks," calls for national unity, and even direct responses to his critics.¹¹⁰ For Roosevelt, public

opinion was a major factor in determining his rhetorical strategies.

Steven Casey documents Roosevelt's reliance on public opinion in *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany*, exploring how Roosevelt and those around him carefully monitored U.S. public opinion before and during the Second World War. Although the majority of this book focuses on the period when the United States was engaged in the war in Europe, Casey's meticulous research of primary sources provides an illuminating picture of how the president measured, interpreted, and then used U.S. public opinion to his benefit during 1939 to 1941. For example, Casey explains that the president was acutely aware that "the domestic mood [over the growing German threat and the possibility of the U.S. entering the war] could not be merely ignored."¹¹¹ Carefully attuned to U.S. public opinion, Casey explains how Roosevelt saved the "Fireside Chats" for two broad purposes: "mobiliz[ing] opinion behind a specific initiative" and "to drive home the full implications of any change in the external environment, so as to further erode the public's complacency about European developments."¹¹²

In his essay "Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Public Opinion," U.S. military and diplomatic historian Mark A. Stoler describes how and why Roosevelt and his administration traced public opinion so carefully during this period. He explains that one primary reason was because Roosevelt "feared [public opinion], primarily as a result of his experiences during and after World War I." Stoler remarks that Roosevelt watched Woodrow Wilson's "public support evaporate during the fight over the League of Nations and Treaty of Versailles," an action which led to the "Senate rejection of that

treaty and of U.S. membership in the League [and]... his own defeat as the Democratic vice presidential nominee in the 1920 election.”¹¹³ Roosevelt’s awareness of Wilson’s failure with the League of Nations resulted in a concerted effort by the president and his staff to carefully monitor the pulse of the nation and then use various modes of communication, including the “Fireside Chats,” to address concerns clearly and directly.

Historians also have written more generally on the sweeping impact of radio during the 1920s and 1930s. Of specific importance to this study is Robert J. Brown’s book entitled *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America* and Douglas B. Craig’s *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940*. Both works explore how this new medium changed the political and cultural scene in the United States and provided a medium Roosevelt could use to communicate with the U.S. public in a fresh, new way.¹¹⁴

This study bridges two specific streams of literature on Roosevelt and his presidency. Although scholars such as Amos Kiewe have paid great attention to Roosevelt’s first “Fireside Chat” and its ability to still public anxiety over the banking crisis, no one has yet written on the significance of Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats” leading up to the United States’ entrance into World War II. Although several historians and rhetoricians have worked on Roosevelt’s use of rhetorical devices to appeal to the U.S. public during this period, none has focused on how Roosevelt attempted to use the “Fireside Chats,” an established medium of trust and personal connection between Roosevelt and the mass public, to move the U.S. public away from isolationism and closer to supporting U.S. intervention in the European conflict. This project builds upon

both streams of literature and connects historical and rhetorical scholarship to assess how Roosevelt used these “Chats” as a particular persuasive device and how his audience, the U.S. public, responded.

Outline of Chapters

This project considers these five “Fireside Chats” as a body of rhetoric designed to persuade the U.S. public that sending military and economic aid to Great Britain was the best way to keep the United States out of war with Germany. Chapter two discusses how Roosevelt addressed his audience’s fear that sending U.S. aid to Great Britain would undermine the social and domestic gains accomplished during the past seven years and bring about a second economic crisis. Instead, Roosevelt argued that this aid was essential to preserving economic stability and the U.S. “way of life” since a Nazi victory in Great Britain would bring the war closer to U.S. shores.¹¹⁵ Drawing on Black, Ong, and Ede and Lunsford’s work on audience addressed / audience invoked, I discuss how Roosevelt invoked a citizenry united around his plan and motivated by a shared desire to keep the United States out of war. The third chapter of this project examines how Roosevelt used identification with his audience to argue that supporting the Allied nations, particularly Great Britain, in their fight against Germany would shelter the United States from the European conflict. Keenly aware that the U.S. public feared a second world war, Roosevelt called his audience to sacrifice as if “we were at war” but stated that sending U.S. armaments to England would allow the British to “fight for their liberty and our security.”¹¹⁶ This chapter also discusses the rhetoric of the America First Committee and their attempt to label Roosevelt as a “war lord” trying to get the United States into war with Germany.

Chapter four considers Roosevelt's final pre-war "Fireside Chat" on September 11, 1941, as an example of presidential war rhetoric. I examine why Roosevelt chose to use the U.S.S. *Greer* incident to introduce his "shoot on sight" policy and use Campbell and Jamieson's framework for war rhetoric to conduct a rhetorical analysis of the text. My final chapter argues that to fully understand the historical, political, social, economic, and cultural climate of the United States between 1939 to 1941, one must consider these five "Fireside Chats" as an essential rhetorical text. I discuss the insights they provide to Roosevelt as President, Roosevelt as rhetorician, and how they demonstrate Roosevelt's keen understanding of the U.S. public at this uncertain time in U.S. history. Finally, I provide areas for future study.

CHAPTER TWO

CITIZEN ADDRESSED, CITIZENRY INVOKED: FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT'S CALL FOR CIVIC DUTY

We met the issue of 1933 with courage and realism. We face this new crisis – this new threat to the security of our nation – with the same courage and realism.¹¹⁷

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 29, 1940

After listening to the president's May 27, 1941, "Fireside Chat," Private Jerry Ryan, a recent enlistee in the U.S. army, penned a letter to Roosevelt: "Tonight I listened to your speech," he wrote, "and I wish to express my admiration for you, both as my President and Commander in Chief." He had enlisted in the U.S. army four months ago, Private Ryan explained. "I quit my job, left my mother and [s]weetheart behind, for there is something inside me that told me I had to help protect all of the fine things that America means to me." He continued,

When I think of what other Americans before me have gone through in order to let me have the wonderful opportunities I have had, it seems I have really done nothing. But I'm where I can help now, and I'm willing to help in every way that I can . . . last week I was sent down here from Hamilton Field to study a course in Airplane Mechanics at California Flyers Inc. So I will at the end of six months be in more of a position to really help out in the defence [sic] work. When I think of what a wonderful opportunity this is, I feel humble to Uncle Sam . . . I feel humble writing this letter to you – perhaps you will never see it. But I thought you might wonder how we soldiers feel. [We're] behind each other, [we're] behind you, and [we're] behind America, and we intend to remain there[,] ready to give our lives if necessary . . .¹¹⁸

In this letter to President Roosevelt, Private Ryan expressed the sense of duty he felt to his country, indicating his willingness to "help in every way" that he could to defend the

United States of America and “all of the fine things that America” meant to him. He and his fellow soldiers were “behind each other,” their president, and their country. They intended to “remain there,” he wrote. United by a common sense of duty to their nation and their fellow citizens, Private Ryan and his fellow soldiers responded to Roosevelt’s call for sacrifice, resolve, and patriotism by offering their loyalty, their service and, if necessary, their very lives.

This chapter considers how President Franklin D. Roosevelt used these five “Fireside Chats” to invoke a certain type of U.S. citizen, namely one who would support sending U.S. aid to Great Britain. He argued that supporting the British effort against Nazi Germany was the best way to ensure domestic and economic stability at home and preserve the values, freedoms, and overall “way of life” that U.S. citizens enjoyed.¹¹⁹ Speaking to a nation fearful of a second economic crisis and convinced that sending military aid to Great Britain would undermine U.S. economic growth, Roosevelt argued instead that sending U.S. support to Great Britain would actually ensure the safety and security of the United States. To move his audience to action, the president compared the European war with the Great Depression, asking his audience to demonstrate similar “courage and realism” in the face of this new international threat.¹²⁰ In what follows, I provide a brief historical context of the Great Depression and explain how Roosevelt both addressed and invoked his audience during his Great Depression “Fireside Chats.” I then theorize my claim that Roosevelt addressed and invoked a specific type of citizen and citizenry in his five pre-war “Fireside Chats.” After this historical and theoretical background, I consider how Roosevelt invoked the ideal citizen / citizenry in these five

“Fireside Chats.” Although Roosevelt employed numerous rhetorical strategies to do this, for the purposes of this chapter I examine five specific ways in which Roosevelt called forth an ideal citizenry through his rhetoric.

Historical Context

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the presidential oath of office on March 4, 1933, the United States was in the midst of the greatest economic crisis in the nation’s history. After the stock market crash in October 1929, the U.S. economy plummeted and millions of U.S. citizens found themselves without jobs. Between 1929 and 1932, the Gross National Product was cut in half from \$103.1 billion to \$55.6 billion. More than one hundred thousand businesses failed. The value of both U.S. imports and exports declined by more than sixty-five percent. Although U.S. unemployment stood at 3.2 percent in 1929, it quickly rose to 8.9 percent in 1930, 16.3 percent in 1931, and 24.1 percent in 1932. By the time Roosevelt moved into the White House, 25.2 percent of the U.S. workforce was jobless, and a “fog of despair hung over the land.”¹²¹

In October 1928, the New York City Health Department found that more than one-fifth of public school children were malnourished.¹²² With commodity prices plummeting, farmers were unable to find a market for their corn, wheat, and soybeans. As a result, many farms fell into foreclosure, leaving the former occupants with no place to live.¹²³ Iowa farmers stopped milk trucks and emptied the cartons out along empty fields, roads, and ditches.¹²⁴ In West Virginia, families of miners set up tents on the side of road, surviving on “pinto beans and black coffee.”¹²⁵ A job picking cotton in Arizona left its earner only thirty cents a week after bills for food and housing were paid.¹²⁶ For those who held savings

accounts, the “bank holidays” provided a source of great anxiety and unrest. Many banks across the country began imposing “holidays” (closing the bank without warning for days on end), or shut their doors altogether. In 1929, a total of 659 banks, with deposits nearing \$250,000,000 closed their doors; in 1930, 1,352 banks with deposits of \$853,000,000 did the same.¹²⁷ In a period before federal deposit insurance guaranteed the safety of one’s savings, many individuals and families found themselves suddenly bankrupt.¹²⁸

The collapse of the economy symbolized what historian David M. Kennedy called “the end of an era.”¹²⁹ “So came to an end the Jazz Age, the Roaring Twenties, the Republican Prosperity, the New Economic Era,” wrote another.¹³⁰ The U.S. industrial prowess of the 1920s screeched to a halt, for “the roaring industrial expansion that had boomed since the Civil War hushed to a near standstill for half a generation.”¹³¹ By September 1931, manufacturing volume had reduced by fifty percent, and by 1932, the nation’s steel plants operated at only eleven percent of their capacity.¹³² This financial collapse brought forth new skepticism towards capitalism and big business. Although wealthy tycoons such as Henry Ford, John D. Rockefeller, and Charles Schwab responded to the stock market crash with optimistic confidence, the rapidly increasing unemployment numbers and soup kitchen lines signaled that something was terribly wrong with the U.S. economy.¹³³

However, many economists and government officials, including President Herbert Hoover, believed that the economic crisis would be short lived, a mere blip on the economic radar. They compared the rise in unemployment following the stock market crash to the depression of 1920-22.¹³⁴ On the surface, the early 1920s did seem worse. According to a

report published by the Works Progress Administration in 1937, administrator Harry L. Hopkins compared the unemployment numbers in 1921 of 4.2 million people to 1.8 million unemployed workers in 1929.¹³⁵ What Hoover and others failed to realize, however, was the full extent of economic upheaval, an upheaval which would take several years to fully manifest itself throughout the U.S. economy.

On May 1, 1930, Hoover infamously declared that the United States had passed “through one of those great economic storms which periodically bring hardship and suffering upon our people . . . [and] I am convinced we have now passed the worst and with continued unity of effort we shall rapidly recover.”¹³⁶ In a speech to the American Bankers Association in October, Hoover described the depression as a “severe shock” causing “disorganization in our economic system” and yet argued that “the fundamental assets of the Nation, the education, intelligence, virility, and the spiritual strength of our 120,000,000 people have been unimpaired . . . [and the] resources of our country in lands and minds are undiminished.”¹³⁷ Yet the worst was not over. In 1932, U.S. unemployment reached 24.1 percent.¹³⁸ That November the U.S. public, desperate for economic relief, rallied around New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt and his promise to address the economic crisis. On election day, three million more voters went to the polls than in 1928.¹³⁹ After a hard fought campaign, Governor Roosevelt claimed a victory of 22,810,000 votes to Hoover’s 15,759,000. Roosevelt carried all but six states, giving him a total of 472 electoral votes compared to Hoover’s fifty-nine.¹⁴⁰ After Hoover’s overwhelming loss, *TIME* referred to the outgoing executive as “President Reject,” stating that Hoover’s defeat “was the worst

any President had had in a straight two-party campaign since . . . [1864] when Lincoln beat General McClellan 212 to 21.”¹⁴¹

Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office on March 4, 1933. In his inaugural address, Roosevelt proclaimed that the only thing the nation needed to fear was “fear itself” and promised to “wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.”¹⁴² As Davis Houck records in his rhetorical analysis of Roosevelt’s First Inaugural, *FDR and Fear Itself*, Roosevelt’s audience responded to his words with hope, confidence, and courage.¹⁴³ “After listening to your touching inaugural address,” wrote Dorothy Fullinger of Florida, “I felt as if I could stretch out my arms and cry: ‘I’m glad I’m an American!’ It gave me a new thrill in life, something to live for.”¹⁴⁴ Raymond Hummel from California expressed the physical impact Roosevelt’s words had on him: “To-day sitting among a gathering of the all but ‘forgotten men’ during your inaugural address, I seen [sic] those worried looks replaced by smiles and confidence, eyes fill up with tears of gratitude, shoulders lifted and chest out.”¹⁴⁵ Eight days later, Roosevelt delivered his first “Fireside Chat,” an address in which he explained to the U.S. public the current banking situation and laid out his plans for economic recovery. In stark contrast to Hoover’s lack of direct communication with the citizenry, Roosevelt addressed his audience as “friends” and equals, indicating his desire to talk with them about the problems that confronted them individually and as a nation. As discussed in the initial chapter of this project, Roosevelt’s first “Fireside Chat” greatly boosted the confidence and morale of the U.S. citizenry. Amos Kiewe writes in his study of the address, *FDR’s First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis*, that

Roosevelt's March 4, 1933, radio address drastically changed the "public psychology" by instilling courage and confidence in his audience, allaying their fears, generating support for his economic program, and providing faith and inspiration.¹⁴⁶

Throughout his first and second terms as president, Roosevelt continued to use "Fireside Chats" to update the public on the progress of various social programs, the state of the U.S. economy, and the overall progress of the nation. Citizens frequently expressed their appreciation that he took the time to explain the details and facts of the domestic and economic issues the United States faced, even when difficult. In these Depression-era "Fireside Chats," Roosevelt spoke to the U.S. public about how the economic crisis impacted them individually and the nation as a whole. According to Samuel Rosenman, Roosevelt's ability to "create a feeling of intimacy with each of his listeners" came from the fact that Roosevelt "felt that intimacy himself."

As he spoke, it was obvious that he was thinking of the different kinds of people he was talking with, rather than talking to. It was as if the microphone had been removed and he was seated in the living rooms of the American families. He forgot the audience of friends in the room; he would gesture as if he were discussing crops with a farmer, or the price of food with a housewife, or rates of wages with a worker. There was no attempt at oratory; in its place were substituted deep sincerity of tone, friendliness, warmth and calmness of voice. In a word, he would "chat."¹⁴⁷

Roosevelt actually verbalized this fact, telling his audience that he visualized "all those Americans with whom I was talking." He described how he saw "the workman in the mills, the mines, the factories; the girl behind the counter; the small shopkeeper; the farmer doing his spring plowing; the widows and the old men wondering about their life's savings."

These were the citizens Roosevelt addressed as he explained to them, “the great mass of the American people, what the banking crisis meant to them in their daily lives.”¹⁴⁸

Roosevelt also called forth a certain type of audience and citizenry in these “Chats,” one that would respond to the Great Depression with courage, confidence, and hope for a better future. “Confidence and courage are the essentials of success in carrying out our plan,” Roosevelt proclaimed on March 12, 1933. “You people must have faith; you must not be stampeded by rumors or guesses. Let us unite in banishing fear. We have provided the machinery to restore our financial system, and it is up to you to support it and make it work.”¹⁴⁹ Here Roosevelt directly expressed how the individual citizen and the collective citizenry should respond. They must show faith, reject rumors, and unite to banish fear. Only collective support for Roosevelt’s plan would ensure victory. By invoking a specific response from his audience, Roosevelt provided, in Edwin Black’s terms, “a model of what the rhetor [Roosevelt] would have his real auditor [the individual citizen and collective citizenry] become.”¹⁵⁰ They would respond in certain ways and with certain actions, actions which he stated would contribute to the recovery of the U.S. economic and domestic prosperity. By calling forth an ideal audience in and through his “Fireside Chats,” Roosevelt developed a particular pattern of communication with the citizenry, one on which he would draw heavily upon in the pre-war “Fireside Chats.”

By 1937, four years after Roosevelt took office, the people of the United States still expressed deep concern over the state of the U.S. economy, and with good reason. Although employment numbers had improved and the U.S. economy was slowly recovering, 1937 brought a “depression within a depression” and the “first economic

downturn since Roosevelt had taken office.” Stocks fell by over thirty percent and unemployment numbers rose to 10 million individuals, or nineteen percent of the U.S. workforce. Some critics called it the “Roosevelt Recession.”¹⁵¹ In April 1938, a Gallup Poll reported that fifty-one percent of the U.S. population viewed the “current state of business” as a depression rather than a recession. In the same poll, sixty percent of respondents said they did not feel as if they were better off than they were a year ago.¹⁵² In May, a Gallup Poll reported that when asked if they thought the United States had passed the “worst point in the present depression,” thirty-four percent said yes and forty-seven percent said no; another eighteen percent had “no opinion.”¹⁵³ One year later, as the German threat grew more prominent in Europe, Gallup asked survey respondents to identify “the most important problem before the American people today.” Almost thirty-four percent named “Unemployment – more jobs – more work” and the same number cited “Neutrality – keeping out of the European war, keeping peace” as their main concern.¹⁵⁴ Together, almost seventy percent of the population believed that solving domestic issues at home and keeping the United States out of war abroad were the greatest challenges facing the United States.

When war erupted in Europe in 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt knew that he spoke to an audience deeply concerned about their own domestic issues and overwhelmingly opposed to any U.S. involvement in the conflict. Therefore, in order to convince them that the best way to keep the United States out of war was to support Great Britain, Roosevelt argued that Germany posed a direct threat to the domestic, economic, and social gains the nation had made under his leadership and to the future of the United States.

In order to protect these gains and values, Roosevelt called on his audience to become a supportive, unified public, a citizenry that would rally around his call for personal, individual sacrifice for the good of the entire nation.

Theorizing the Citizen Addressed, Citizenry Invoked

As referenced in the first chapter, several scholars have written about the connection between a speaker's intended audience and the one he/she creates or calls into being in his/her address. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford argue that the direct audience a writer/speaker addresses and the audience a writer/speaker invokes are not mutually exclusive. That is, a writer/speaker may address a specific, intended audience *and* invoke an ideal audience through a particular rhetorical situation. Ede and Lunsford argue, "It is the writer who, as writer and reader of his or her own text, one guided by a sense of purpose and by the particularities of a specific rhetorical situation, establishes the range of potential roles an audience may play."¹⁵⁵ The rhetor thus communicates with his/her intended audience, one existing "outside of the text," while calling forth an audience "through the text" since "it is only through the text, through language, that writers [or rhetors] embody or give life to their conception of the reader [listener]."¹⁵⁶ In this chapter, I argue that Roosevelt addressed his intended audience, the "great mass of American people," in these "Fireside Chats" and, at the same time, invoked a citizenry united by shared values and national purpose.¹⁵⁷

In these five "Fireside Chats," Roosevelt addressed the U.S. public, the audience he had cultivated throughout previous radio addresses since 1933. "Tonight my single duty is to speak to the whole of America," Roosevelt proclaimed in his "Fireside Chat" of

September 3, 1939.¹⁵⁸ He addressed certain individuals and groups in these “Fireside Chats,” speaking to the “workmen in the mills, the mines, the factories,”¹⁵⁹ members of Congress,¹⁶⁰ business and labor leaders,¹⁶¹ and “every American family.”¹⁶² At the same time, Roosevelt called forth certain attitudes, beliefs, values, and courses of action from his audience. “It is my resolve and yours to build up our armed defenses,” Roosevelt confidently asserted in his May 26, 1940, “Fireside Chat.”¹⁶³ Seven months later, he proclaimed that the United States would be “the great arsenal of democracy” not just through military production, but also as the “American people” applied themselves to the “task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.”¹⁶⁴ Edwin Black explains that “rhetorical discourses, either singly or cumulatively in a persuasive movement, will imply an auditor, and that in most cases the implication will be sufficiently suggestive as to enable the critic to link this implied auditor to an ideology.”¹⁶⁵ In other words, rhetorical texts provide clues to the rhetor’s intended audience and the course of action the rhetor wishes them to embrace. In this instance, Roosevelt set forth a link between how his invoked audience, the “implied auditor,” would respond to the course of action, or “ideology,” he set forth. For Roosevelt, the citizen addressed became the citizenry invoked, a unified public ready to respond to the growing German threat with a “courage and realism” equal to their response to the Great Depression. This invoked citizen, as created by Roosevelt, reflects modern theoretical conceptions of citizenship as created through rhetoric.

In his essay, “A Discourse Theory of Citizenship,” Robert Asen persuasively argues that instead of asking “what counts as citizenship, we should ask: how do people enact citizenship?” Doing so allows scholars to reorient “our framework from a question of *what* to a question of *how* [that] usefully directs our attention from acts to action.”¹⁶⁶ In addition, viewing citizenship “as a mode of public engagement . . . shifts our focus from *what* constitutes citizenship to *how* citizenship proceeds.”¹⁶⁷ Asen sets forth a theory of citizenship that stresses the importance of individual actions for the good of the whole, the nation. When considering citizenship in this project and how Roosevelt invokes a certain type of citizen through his rhetoric, I draw upon Asen’s discourse theory of citizenship as a mode or “manner of doing something,” a daily, normative, quotidian process of expressing one’s civic engagement.¹⁶⁸ Roosevelt conceptualized citizenship in a similar manner in these “Fireside Chats,” calling for personal, everyday acts from his audience motivated by a shared sense of civic duty and desire to keep the United States out of war with Germany.¹⁶⁹

Declaring an unlimited national emergency in his “Fireside Chat” of May 27, 1941, Roosevelt declared that the U.S. government had “the right to expect of all citizens that they take part in the common work of our common defense – take loyal part from this moment forward.” The “common work” of “common defense” went beyond a mental or emotional state of his audience, however. “I have recently set up the machinery for civilian defense,” Roosevelt continued. “It will rapidly organize, locality by locality. It will depend on the organized effort of men and women everywhere. All will have opportunities and responsibilities to fulfill.”¹⁷⁰ Men and women, in every state

across the country, were called to action, asked by their president to do specific things to contribute to the common defense of the nation. Defense meant “more than merely fighting,” Roosevelt explained. He asked his audience to protect the nation by maintaining civilian and military morale, using “every available resource,” discarding “rumor and distorted statement,” recognizing the “fifth columnists” for the “incendiary bombs” that they were.¹⁷¹ These actions Roosevelt called for were ones that any citizen, male or female, young or old, could accomplish. As Asen notes, “democracy signifies something both enacted by individuals and yet realized as the creation of everyone . . . [d]emocracy’s heart does not beat in the halls of Congress or in the voting booth, but in everyday enactments of citizenship.”¹⁷² Acting individually and yet as a whole through these “everyday enactments of citizenship,” Roosevelt’s audience responded not only as the audience he addressed, but also as the audience he invoked, a citizenry unified in defense of their nation.

In the rest of this chapter, I argue that Roosevelt invoked this type of citizen and citizenry by (1) evoking public memory of the Great Depression; (2) identifying the shared moral and national values of his audience; (3) emphasizing the great importance of the economic and social gains made in the United States; (4) appealing to the “patriotism of labor” to end union strikes; (5) and equating a German victory in Great Britain with economic strangulation of the United States. Speaking to an audience deeply concerned about the economic and social state of the country, Roosevelt focused these appeals on the U.S. domestic front. In doing so, he equated the current international

struggle with the Great Depression, ultimately calling his audience to respond with “similar courage and realism.”¹⁷³

Roosevelt’s Call for Civic Duty

Evoking Public Memory

To encourage his audience to take “full part” in the defense of the United States, Roosevelt reminded his audience of other times in the nation’s history when the country had been threatened by domestic crises and international events.¹⁷⁴ On December 29, 1940, Roosevelt reminded his audience of his first “Chat” to the U.S. public. Having just announced the Lend-Lease bill in a press conference a week earlier, the president went to the airwaves to explain this course of action to the U.S. public. Greeting his audience as “my friends,” he explained that “in the presence of a world crisis, my mind goes back eight years to a night in the midst of a domestic crisis . . . a time when the wheels of American industry were grinding to a full stop, when the whole banking system of our country had ceased to function.” Recalling some of the darkest days of the Great Depression, Roosevelt reminded his audience of the dismal state of affairs in March 1933.

I had before my eyes the picture of all those Americans with whom I was talking . . . the workmen in the mills, the mines, the factories; the girl behind the counter; the small shopkeeper; the farmer doing his spring plowing; the widows and the old men wondering about their life’s savings.

By naming these individuals and describing their surroundings, their actions, and their emotions, Roosevelt brought images of suffering citizens before the eyes of his audience. For Quintilian, the concept of “bringing-before-the-eyes” allowed a listener to visualize

what the speaker was describing in the present, to feel as if he/she were “actually present at the affairs of which we are speaking.”¹⁷⁵ Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca refer to this concept of presence, the ability of a speaker “to make present, by verbal magic alone, what is actually absent but what he considers important to his argument or, by making them more present, to enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious.”¹⁷⁶ By reminding his audience of these specific individuals and citizens, Roosevelt brought the presence of these workmen, shopkeepers, farmers, girls, widows, and old men into the immediate consciousness of those listening to his “Fireside Chat.” Not only could they visualize these citizens figuratively in their mind’s eye, but Roosevelt’s description allowed those listening to think of individuals they knew personally. In this sense, Roosevelt did not speak in generalities, but instead described friends, neighbors, family members, and individuals listening to his “Fireside Chat.” Doing so unified his audience around shared knowledge and experience, for almost everyone listening to his “Fireside Chat” could visualize a particular individual he/she knew.

Roosevelt explained that his goal in 1933 was to “convey to the great mass of American people what the banking crisis meant to them in their daily lives.” On this night eight years later, he said, “I want to do the same thing, with the same people, in this new crisis which faces America. We met the issue of 1933 with courage and realism. We face this new crisis – this new threat to the security of our nation – with the same courage and realism.”¹⁷⁷ Here Roosevelt connected his first “Fireside Chat” that addressed the banking crisis with his radio address of December 29, 1940, and the present

state of the nation. “We met the issue of 1933,” the Great Depression, “with courage and realism.” By utilizing the plural “we,” Roosevelt implied that he was united with his audience and that together, he and the citizenry had conquered that crisis. In the face of this “new threat to the security of our nation,” Roosevelt said he wanted to “do the same thing, with the same people.” Just as the U.S. public had met and conquered the Great Depression, Roosevelt proclaimed that “we,” the president and the U.S. public, “face this new crisis – this new threat to the security of our nation – with the same courage and realism.” It is important to note here that Roosevelt did not qualify the action by stating “we will” or “we must.” Instead, he used present tense, indicating that now, in the present moment, he and the citizenry already were facing this new threat exactly as they had during the Great Depression, “with courage and realism.”¹⁷⁸

In his May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” the president used his own famous words to remind his audience of how they had met and conquered previous crises together. After declaring an unlimited national emergency and introducing his plan to use U.S. ships to carry supplies to Great Britain, Roosevelt declared to his audience that they must not “be defeated by the fear of the very danger which we are preparing to resist.” After a long pause, he continued: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” By quoting the most famous line from his inaugural address, Roosevelt reminded the sixty-five million people in twenty million homes listening to his talk of the fear they had fought together during the Great Depression.¹⁷⁹ In the face of the worst economic crisis in the history of the United States, he had told them not to fear. Towards this new threat, this international conflict which threatened to engulf the globe, he used the same words to call forth

strength and resolve. Bradford Vivian refers to the idea of repeating famous national words as *reciting*: “for commemorative purposes, the very ritual or symbolic action of *reciting* traditional texts is often more essential to maintaining the continuity of collective memory than conjuring new turns of phrase.”¹⁸⁰ This is exactly what Roosevelt wished to do. By *reciting* his exhortation to reject fear, the president not only called his audience to embrace courage and confidence, but he called forth “the political lessons [his statement] symbolize[d] . . . more pervasively than the transcendent artistry of singular oratorical masterworks.”¹⁸¹ In just ten words, Roosevelt reminded his audience of their shared history, shared victory, and called the same audience to become “a united and determined people” who would reject fear and stand united to win the “ultimate victory” against Germany.¹⁸²

Roosevelt also *recited* other sacred national texts and referenced specific events in U.S. history in these “Fireside Chats” to move his audience towards supporting U.S. aid to Great Britain. Announcing unlimited national emergency in his “Fireside Chat” of May 27, 1941, the president stated that “[o]ur Bunker Hill of tomorrow may be several thousand miles from Boston, Massachusetts,” a prediction which became a fact after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.¹⁸³ At the end of the address, Roosevelt *recited* the words of those who signed the Declaration of Independence, linking his audience to “that little band of patriots, fighting long ago against overwhelming odds, but certain as we are now, of ultimate victory: ‘With firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.’”¹⁸⁴ Here Roosevelt *recited* one of the most famous sentences from the Declaration of

Independence, one of the most sacred texts of U.S. public memory. The president's message was clear. Just as that "little band of patriots" had pledged their "lives, fortunes, and sacred honor" to the U.S. colonial revolution, so too the citizenry must unite together in common defense of their nation.

Roosevelt's audience responded to his call for unity and individual sacrifice. "Dear Mr. President," Phil Kennedy wrote after Roosevelt's September 3, 1939, "Fireside Chat," "I listened to your talk last night and thought it was wonderful . . . after hearing your speech, I resolved to live for my country, and live the best I can, you know that's a harder job than to die for it in war."¹⁸⁵ Mr. Kennedy's acknowledgment that Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat" led to his resolve to "live for [his] country" demonstrates how Roosevelt called forth a certain type of citizen in these "Fireside Chats," one who was willing to sacrifice individually for the good of the nation. David Flanzbaum from Somerville, New Jersey, wrote that Roosevelt's December 29, 1940, "Fireside Chat" deeply moved him through its "crystal clear presentation of our situation today . . . [and] I feel obliged to try in a small way to convey to you the faith and hope I know the great masses of we Americans have placed and continue to hold in you." Mr. Flanzbaum expressed that Roosevelt's "clear presentation" of the danger facing the United States brought forth "much hope and courage" to the audience, a united entity he referred to as "we Americans." He continued, "I have just passed my twenty-second birthday and am the holder of a low draft number. I expect to be in service very shortly and I am proud to have this privilege – humbly grateful to God that I am an American."¹⁸⁶ Here Mr. Flanzbaum implicitly linked the privilege of serving his country in the military with his

identification as an American; as a proud citizen, he would respond to Roosevelt's call for duty and sacrifice by defending the nation through military service.

Identifying Shared Values

Roosevelt also utilized national images, shared values, and symbolic texts to identify with his audience and invoke a citizenry resolved to take action to defend Great Britain. In his September 3, 1939, "Fireside Chat," Roosevelt addressed an audience stunned by Hitler's swift invasion of Poland two days earlier and the immediate declaration of war against Germany by Great Britain and France. "My countrymen and my friends," he began, immediately establishing a connection between himself and the U.S. public that united them as fellow "countrymen" of the United States.¹⁸⁷ Roosevelt affirmed his desire, and the desire of his audience, to remain at peace. "In spite of spreading wars," he explained, "I think that we have every right and every reason to maintain as a national policy the fundamental moralities, the teachings of religion (and) the continuation of efforts to restore peace." He continued,

Most of us in the United States believe in spiritual values. Most of us, regardless of what church we belong to, believe in the spirit of the New Testament – a great teaching which opposes itself to the use of force, of armed force, of marching armies and falling bombs. The overwhelming masses of our people seek peace – peace at home, and the kind of peace in other lands which will not jeopardize our peace at home. We have certain ideas and certain ideals of national safety and we must act to preserve that safety today and to preserve the safety of our children in future years.¹⁸⁸

Roosevelt connected the shared desire for peace with the necessity of preserving and securing peace and safety for "our children in future years." He argued that when "peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger."¹⁸⁹ As

such, he prepared his audience for the fact that the United States “must act” to preserve that peace and to “keep war from our own firesides.”¹⁹⁰

Roosevelt invoked feelings of patriotism and civic duty when he called for a buildup of military armaments in his May 26, 1940, “Fireside Chat.” He reminded his audience that for “more than three centuries we Americans have been building on this continent a free society, a society in which the promise of the human spirit may find fulfillment.” This national effort to strengthen national defenses was a continuation of

efforts to bring the blessings of a free society, of a free and productive economic system, to every family in the land. This is the promise of America. It is this that we must continue to build – this that we must continue to defend. It is the task of our generation, yours and mine. But we build and defend not for our generation alone. We defend the foundations laid down by our fathers. We build a life for generations yet unborn. We defend and we build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind. Ours is a high duty, a noble task.¹⁹¹

Having established previously that his audience desired peace and security for their nation, Roosevelt argued that increasing military weapons and supplies was a way to preserve “the blessings of a free society” and defend the United States. By strengthening the defenses of the nation through individual sacrifice and communal participation in the war effort, the citizenry defended “the foundations laid down by [their] fathers” and built “a life for generations unborn.” Moreover, Roosevelt explained that “we,” the president and the citizenry, “defend and we build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind.”

At the beginning of his address, Roosevelt pleaded with his audience to donate money to the Red Cross on behalf of the “millions” who were fleeing from the advancing German armies across Europe. “I speak to you of these people because each of you that

is listening to me tonight has a way of helping them.” Thus, when Roosevelt called his audience to defend and build “a way of life . . . for all mankind,” he referred not just to the citizens of the United States, but to the men, women, and children in other nations who also longed for freedom, individual liberty, and peace. Seven months later, when Roosevelt introduced his Lend-Lease bill to the U.S. public, this idea of building and defending a “way of life . . . for all mankind” expanded to include the citizens of Great Britain as the United States provided the tanks, airplanes, weapons, and supplies the British needed to defend their country against Germany. For Roosevelt, aiding the British in their struggle against Germany was a way to fight against Nazi tyranny and oppression in Europe. Ultimately, however, he argued that it could protect the United States from involvement in the war overseas, a goal that his audience all shared.

In his “Fireside Chat” of December 29, 1940, Roosevelt appealed once again to the U.S. public’s shared desire for peace and security. To do this he stated that the future peace and security of the United States was directly dependent on Great Britain.

The British people and their allies today are conducting an active war against this unholy alliance [of Germany, Italy, and Japan]. Our own future security is greatly dependent on the outcome of that fight. Our ability to “keep out of war” is going to be affected by that outcome. Thinking in terms of today and tomorrow, I make the direct statement to the American people that there is far less chance of the United States getting into war if we do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis than if we acquiesce in their defeat, submit tamely to an Axis victory, and wait our turn to be the object of attack in another war later on.¹⁹²

If the people of the United States wanted to avoid war with Germany, Roosevelt argued that they needed to do all they could now instead of waiting to be attacked later.

Essentially, Roosevelt argued that if the U.S. public wanted to avoid war with the Axis

powers, they needed to unify around his plan for sending aid to Great Britain. “This is not a matter of sentiment or of controversial personal opinion,” he proclaimed.

We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show as if we were at war.¹⁹³

Once again, Roosevelt used the “we” to unify himself with his audience and the millions of individuals listening to the radio address with their fellow citizens across the country. He called them, individually and collectively, to respond with seriousness, resolution, urgency, patriotism, and sacrifice—five characteristics that the majority of U.S. citizens shared and valued. “I have the profound conviction,” Roosevelt said at the end of his address, “that the American people are now determined to put forth a mightier effort than they have ever yet made to increase our production of all the implements of defense, to meet the threat to our democratic faith.”¹⁹⁴ In no uncertain terms, the president laid out his expectations for the U.S. public. Although the nation was not at war, Roosevelt invoked an audience ready to defend their “democratic faith” with all the energy, strength, ingenuity, and manpower they could muster “as if we were at war.”¹⁹⁵ Through these “everyday enactments of citizenship,” Roosevelt’s audience would contribute to the defense of the United States.¹⁹⁶

James Saunders from Annapolis, Maryland, voiced his appreciation for this national heritage. “It is your fearful and solemn duty,” he wrote to the president, “to preserve for us against the threat of international banditry the priceless heritage that belongs to me and my fellow countrymen and our children, one and preserved with our fathers’ blood.”¹⁹⁷ It was this priceless heritage that was being threatened by the

Germans. “The nation can feel safe with your hand at the helm,” Mr. Saunders concluded. Mrs. Ruth Morris of Long Beach, California, proudly claimed two sons who were serving in the U.S. Navy. “I am not speaking for them,” she wrote, “but . . . we are, in other words, putting our sons in your care, proud and happy to know that part of us, our sons, are ready and willing to protect these United States, because it belongs to them.” Mrs. Morris expressed pride that a “part of us,” her sons, were serving in the military to protect the United States from attack. “We all know you will not send our sons to foreign lands,” she wrote, “but we do know that every one of us will fight to keep them from coming here, [b]y giving all the aid possible to Great Britain will be the one way of doing that.”¹⁹⁸ For Mrs. Morris, sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to protect and defend the nation for herself, her sons, and future generations.

Emphasizing Commitment to “The Great Social Gains”¹⁹⁹

In his pre-war “Fireside Chats,” Roosevelt stressed his commitment to the social and economic gains made under his leadership, arguing that they were vital to the defense of the nation. When Roosevelt announced his plan to strengthen the United States’ military reserves in his May 26, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” he cautioned that there were “several things we must continue to watch and safeguard, things which are just as important to the sound defense of a nation as physical armament itself.”²⁰⁰ Although an increase in military weapons, tanks, and airplanes would strengthen “our first line of defense,” Roosevelt said that “it is still clear that way down at the bottom, underlying them all, giving them their strength, sustenance and power, are the spirit and morale of a

free people.”²⁰¹ To maintain this national spirit and morale, he emphasized that the nation

must make sure, in all that we do, that there be no breakdown or cancellation of any of the great social gains which we have made in these past years. We have carried on an offensive on a broad front against social and economic inequalities and abuses which had made our society weak. That offensive should not now be broken down by the pincers movement of those who would use the present needs of physical military defense to destroy it.²⁰²

After seven years of working to eliminate “social and economic inequalities and abuses” that weakened the United States and national unity, the president reaffirmed his commitment to domestic policies while building up the nation’s military reserves for national defense.

Roosevelt addressed the workers in his audience, promising that there was “nothing in our present emergency to justify making the workers of our nation toil for longer hours than now limited by statute.” Instead, the president stated that as orders for planes, tanks, guns, and military supplies came in, “tens of thousands of people, who are now unemployed, will, I believe, receive employment.”²⁰³ Moreover, no national emergency should “justify a lowering of the standards of employment.” If anything, Roosevelt said, the increase in national production should encourage businesses to increase the minimum wage. “Let us remember that the policy and the laws that provide for collective bargaining are still in force,” the president stated. He declared that pensions, unemployment, and other gains made for workers during the New Deal should continue. “There is nothing in our present emergency to justify a retreat from any of our social objectives – from conservation of natural resources, assistance to agriculture,

housing, and help to the underprivileged.”²⁰⁴ By emphasizing his ongoing commitment to the workers of the United States, Roosevelt reminded his audience that he had not forgotten their individual struggles and the great social gains the nation had made during the past seven years.

The president also spoke to business leaders of the nation, asking them to participate in building up the military resources of the United States.

We are calling on the resources, the efficiency and the ingenuity of the American manufacturers of war material of all kinds – airplanes and tanks and guns and ships, and all the hundreds of products that go into this material. The Government of the United States itself manufactures few of the implements of war. Private industry will continue to be the sources of most of this material, and private industry will have to be speeded up to produce it at the rate and efficiency called for by the needs of the times.²⁰⁵

Roosevelt called on private businesses to mobilize their factories and workers to meet the military demands of the U.S. government. “We are calling on men now engaged in private industry to help us in carrying out this program,” he said. By addressing the businessmen in the “private industry,” Roosevelt appealed to another section of his audience, those citizens who possessed a specific technical or managerial skill. Just as the workers of the nation would help in assembling tanks and planes on the line, the president also called on “patriotic Americans of proven merit and of unquestioned ability in their special fields” to volunteer their “training, their experience, and their capability” to their country. He realized, the president said, that “private business cannot be expected to make all of the capital investment required for expansions of plants and factories and personnel which this program calls for at once.” As such, Roosevelt announced that the U.S. government would provide necessary funds to enlarge factories,

build new plants, provide additional payroll for new workers, supply raw materials, and help transport finished materials.

By emphasizing his commitment to the “great social gains” the United States had made during his first two terms as president, Roosevelt invoked a citizenry prepared to sacrifice for the good of the nation. He reminded the workers of past accomplishments made during the New Deal—such as a minimum wage, standards of employment, and union bargaining rights—and he assured them that these benefits would continue. In his “Fireside Chat” of December 29, 1940, Roosevelt called upon the business leaders of the nation to assist the government in military production, using their ingenuity to provide “the best, speediest and most efficient mass production of which [private industry] is capable.”²⁰⁶ He confidently asserted that the entire nation, including workers and business leaders, was “making a great effort to produce everything that is necessary in this emergency – and with all possible speed. And this great effort requires great sacrifice.”²⁰⁷ Although Roosevelt called the citizenry to actions of individual, personal sacrifice, he argued that these actions would allow the United States to send military supplies to Great Britain, the nation’s surest line of defense against Germany. Roosevelt reassured his audience that aiding Britain would not lead to a breakdown in the social and economic gains the country had made; instead, U.S. military and economic support for Great Britain would ensure that these domestic gains would continue.

Robert Weston of Schenectady, New York, wrote to the president after his December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat.” After expressing his “deep appreciation” of

Roosevelt's "magnificent address," Mr. Weston thanked him for "the statement that labor's rights will be protected." He continued,

The test of democracy is not in the wealth of the wealthy but in the liberties and character of the common people. We know that abuse by labor of labor's privileges will not and must not be tolerated, but there are plenty of men who for selfish purposes would use the emergency as an excuse to destroy the social gains which you more than any other man have helped to win.²⁰⁸

Here Mr. Weston echoed Roosevelt's commitment to preserving the "great social gains" that had been achieved for the U.S. public. He also declared that "abuse by labor of labor's privileges will not and must not be tolerated," an interesting statement coming from one obviously committed to working class rights. However, Mr. Weston's sentiment reflected the U.S. public's general consensus that those employed in the plants and factories tasked with supplying "the great arsenal of democracy" should be committed to securing the national defense above all else, a consensus Roosevelt addressed in his May 27, 1941 "Fireside Chat."

Appealing to the "Patriotism of Labor"

As Roosevelt sought to invoke a unified audience motivated by a shared commitment to keeping the United States out of war, he specifically addressed those who worked in the factories to produce military supplies, tanks, planes, and weaponry for U.S. reserves and Great Britain in his May 27, 1941, "Fireside Chat." The year 1941 brought the highest increase in labor strikes since 1919 when one out of every twelve workers went on strike.²⁰⁹ These strikes threatened production of essential weapons for Great Britain, including tanks and airplanes. In Milwaukee, workers at the Allis-Chalmers

plant walked out during the winter of 1940-1941 as the company prepared to fulfill a \$40 million contract building turbines for navy destroyers. This “chilling display of the capacity of labor disturbances to cripple the rearmament program” worried the U.S. public.²¹⁰ When asked in March 1941 whether labor union leaders were “helping the national defense program as much as they should,” sixty-eight percent of Gallup Poll respondents said no.²¹¹ During March and April, the War Department printed weekly bulletins detailing the number of “man days” lost and specific items impacted by the strikes. When theaters ran pictures of labor strikes across the country, audiences booed loudly.²¹² It was to this audience—labor and business alike—that Roosevelt delivered the May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat” announcing a state of unlimited national emergency. He argued that business and labor needed to reach an agreement because “the future of all free enterprise – of capital and labor alike – is at stake.”²¹³ Although Roosevelt had called for national unity in previous “Chats,” his demand from labor to support his national policy by cooperating with business signaled a new sense of urgency in his tone and approach. Workers, Roosevelt argued, were responsible for producing “articles of defense” that Great Britain and the United States so desperately needed. However, to fully appreciate Roosevelt’s rhetorical strategy in the midst of the strikes that threatened defense production, it is essential to consider the advice Henry Stimson gave Roosevelt in the days before this “Fireside Chat.”

When Roosevelt and his speechwriters drafted this address, they sent a copy of the fourth version to Secretary of War Henry Stimson for his review. Stimson sent the

draft back to the White House with his comments and edits marked in the margin. On the back of the last page of the speech, Stimson wrote,

The people's minds today are very much concerned with the labor situation and the strikes which are delaying defense[,] yet you do not say a word in the shape of an appeal to the patriotism of labor. Such an appeal would do more to impress readers with the seriousness of the foreign danger than anything you could say. The reader would say "It must be bad if he calls for sacrifice from labor" and as a matter of fact labor should sacrifice its internal politics today as Gompers did 23 years ago.²¹⁴

Here Stimson spoke to the current political climate surrounding the strikes. He predicted that if Roosevelt appealed "to the patriotism of labor," the U.S. public, and the workers themselves, would realize just how grave the German threat was to the United States.

Just a year earlier, Roosevelt had called on "the resources, the efficiency, and the ingenuity of the American manufacturers of war material" to lead the nation in producing the ships, tanks, planes, guns, and other supplies necessary to increase U.S. defenses.²¹⁵

In December, Roosevelt announced that this great national effort would be directed towards supplying Great Britain with the supplies then nation needed to defend itself against Germany. Now, in this address declaring a state of unlimited national emergency, Stimson believed that an appeal to the workers in the plants, factories, and assembly lines would convince the citizenry of the situation's severity.

Stimson also referenced Samuel Gompers, a prominent U.S. labor leader in the early twentieth century and founder of the American Federation of Labor. During World War I, Gompers rallied workers and labor unions around the war effort, arguing that "this war is a people's war – labor's war. The final outcome will be determined in the factories, the mills, the shops, the mines, the farms, the industries, and the transportation

agencies of the various countries.”²¹⁶ He confidently asserted that the workers understood “the gravity of the situation and the responsibility that devolves upon them” and declared that labor would “do its part in every demand the war makes. Our republic, the freedom of the world, progress, and civilization hang in the balance. We dare not fail. We will win.”²¹⁷ In this speech he recorded for the Nation’s Forum, Gompers positioned labor as the key to U.S. defense. Because the workers had struggled “for freedom and for a better life,” they had a “keen appreciation of the opportunities and privileges . . . the free government has given them.” This appreciation of their rights and liberties galvanized the labor unions to sacrifice for the good of the nation. In the same way, in this second international conflict, Stimson advised Roosevelt to call on millions of workers to come to the aid of their nation so that their rights would be defended against Germany.²¹⁸

Stimson’s directive became the “Labor Insert”²¹⁹ in subsequent drafts, and in the final version of his May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt addressed the workers of the United States, calling on them to “play their full parts, without stint, and without selfishness, and without doubt that our democracy will triumphantly survive.”²²⁰ He acknowledged the “[v]ery great social progress” made in recent years, explaining that he wanted to “maintain that progress and strengthen it.” Roosevelt continued,

When the nation is threatened from without, however, as it is today, the actual production and transportation of the machinery of defense must not be interrupted by disputes between capital and capital, labor and labor or capital and labor. The future of all free enterprise – of capital and labor alike – is at stake.²²¹

Not only did Roosevelt expect capital and labor to settle their disputes. “The overwhelming majority of our citizens expect their [g]overnment to see that the tools of defense are built,” he said. Here Roosevelt used “our citizens” to refer to the mass public who was counting on the workers to produce necessary supplies to keep them safe. He connected himself to the workers, using the plural possessive “our” to give labor a sense of ownership and responsibility for the citizenry. Roosevelt explained that the dispute between capital and labor was one that would undermine the nation’s ability to strengthen “our defense to the extreme limit of our national power and authority.” Thus, “for the purpose of preserving the democratic safeguards of both labor and management,” the president indicated that the U.S. government was “determined to use all of its power to express the will of its people, and to prevent interference with the production of materials essential to our nation’s security.”²²² In this speech, Roosevelt appealed to organized labor and the U.S. workers as a patriotic force directly responsible for the defense of the country. He called on them to put the needs of the nation above their individual needs, invoking a unified force dedicated to defending the United States.

J. C. Trees sent President Roosevelt a telegram the day after this “Fireside Chat.” “Yesterday there was room in America for Democrats and Republicans[,] liberals and conservatives[,] and for industrialists[,] workers[,] and farmers,” he wrote. “Today as a result of your magnificent and inspiring leadership there is room only for Americans. You have united the country as no other person could have done . . . I am yours to command.”²²³ At the end of December 1940, twenty-six employees of the Chatham Manufacturing Company in Elkin, North Carolina, pledged their willingness to sacrifice

for the good of the nation. “We want you to know that we are with you all the way in your expressions as to the necessity of aid to Great Britain,” they began.

Some of us who sign this letter fought in the last war in Europe; some of us have sons of military age; some of us are of military age, and all of us want peace. But peace under an Axis dominated World would be a return toward the Dark Ages – a going away from the bright light of Liberty and Freedom which has become the heritage of all of us in our Country. If fight we must, fight we will. But now, this minute, we want to give Britain everything possible for her gallant defense. Ships, guns, planes, supplies, ammunition and all the necessities for war. We are willing to lend or give all these and more. Forget any future payment – we will gladly bear our share of the burden.²²⁴

In this remarkable letter to President Roosevelt, these twenty-six factory workers volunteered to “bear [their] share of the burden” to protect the United States by producing the supplies Britain needed for “her gallant defense.”

Equating German Victory with Economic Strangulation of the United States

In order to convince his audience that sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to keep the United States out of war with Germany, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded the U.S. public that a German victory over Great Britain would directly impact U.S. business, commerce, and trade. He contrasted the current economic and social freedoms U.S. citizens enjoyed with what life would become if Germany controlled all of Europe and began attacks on the United States. In his December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat” in which he declared that the United States must be “the great arsenal of democracy,” Roosevelt explained that Hitler viewed the United States and Germany as “two worlds that stand opposed to each other.”²²⁵ He continued, “The Nazi masters of Germany have made it clear that they intend not only to dominate all life and thought in

their own country, but also to enslave the whole of Europe, and then to use the resources of Europe to dominate the rest of the world.”²²⁶ For Roosevelt, Hitler’s determination to conquer Europe and the rest of the globe had direct economic implications.

If Great Britain goes down, the Axis powers will control the continents of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the high seas – and they will be in a position to bring enormous military and naval resources against this hemisphere. It is no exaggeration to say that all of us, in all the Americas, would be living at the point of a gun – a gun loaded with explosive bullets, economic as well as military. We should enter upon a new and terrible era in which the whole world, our hemisphere included, would be run by threats of brute force. And to survive in such a world, we would have to convert ourselves permanently into a militaristic power on the basis of war economy.²²⁷

In another poignant metaphor, Roosevelt brought the image of a gun before the eyes of his audience. This gun, a representative picture of what a German victory in Great Britain would entail, contained explosive bullets that threatened the safety and security of the United States. The threat was not just military, but economic. Germany “would fasten an economic strangle-hold upon [the remaining Allied] nations.”²²⁸ German control of Europe and Asia would impede the United States’ ability to trade with other nations, a “freedom . . . essential to our economic life.”²²⁹

Roosevelt also argued that a German victory in Europe would also destroy U.S. business and obliterate social policies and programs on which many in his audience depended. According to the “Nazi book of world plan,” the president detailed the specific ways that Germany would “strangle” the United States of America, just as they had other nations such as Austria and Czechoslovakia. The “American laborer would have to compete with slave labor in the rest of the world.” Policies for minimum wages earned and maximum hours worked would be “nonsense” since all “wages and hours

(would be) fixed by Hitler.” Trade unions would become “historic relics” and “collective bargaining a joke.” Set prices for farm production would be subject to “exactly what Hitler wanted to give.” The “whole fabric of working life as we know it – business and manufacturing, mining and agriculture – would be mangled and crippled under such a system.”²³⁰ By enumerating a long list of the inevitable results of a victorious Germany, Roosevelt spoke to every member of his audience. Every man, woman, and child was somehow connected to the “whole fabric of working life” in the United States, whether through business, labor, agriculture, mining, farming, or trade unions. No citizen would be exempt from the grave economic and social consequences that a German defeat of Great Britain would bring.

However, Roosevelt confidently asserted, the United States would not “accept a Hitler-dominated world . . . We will accept only a world consecrated to a freedom of speech and expression – freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – freedom from want – and freedom from terror.”²³¹ These were the shared values of the U.S. public, ideals that reflected Roosevelt’s domestic policy initiatives and commitment to the economic security of the nation. A “Hitler-dominated world” would stand in direct opposition to these ideals, and thus Roosevelt called his audience to unite around his plan for sending U.S. aid to Germany. He asked his audience, “Shall we now, with all our potential strength, hesitate to take every single measure necessary to maintain our American liberties?” The obvious answer to this rhetorical question was no. “As the President of a united and determined people,” Roosevelt declared, “Our people and our [g]overnment will not hesitate to meet that challenge.”²³² By asserting that he spoke for a

people “united and determined” to defend their “American liberties,” Roosevelt invoked a citizenry ready to sacrifice for the nation’s defense.

John C. Benedict wrote to the president after his May 26, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” expressing his view that “we must subordinate all our aims, aspirations and activities to this one task and dedicate our lives and fortunes to it. For unless we can do so quickly and adequately we shall not be able to preserve much of anything that has value and meaning for us to-day.”²³³ The twenty-six employees from the Chatham Manufacturing Company in Elkin, North Carolina, also acknowledged that a German defeat of Great Britain would devastate the United States economically and socially.

With Great Britain defeated, we, as a nation, can be squeezed and isolated, our economic life so restricted that our American standards would topple like ninepins – farms prices at unheard of lows – unemployment at unheard highs – the gains of labor so long in building up swept away in a moment. These things a victorious Axis could, and would, effect in a very short time.

Lead us, Mr. President, to strength and unity. Keep telling us of the perils of this hour. Never let us forget that the things we cherish as our rights are worth sacrificing for and fighting for . . . Lead us boldly, fearlessly and unerringly with the knowledge that we are behind you to a man in this crusade of righteousness.²³⁴

Calling on President Roosevelt to lead the nation to “strength and unity,” these workers expressed their desire to be and to become exactly what Roosevelt envisioned as an ideal citizenry. They wanted to participate in a strong and unified U.S. public. They asked the president to remind them of the “perils” facing their nation and of the sacred values they shared. Finally, they indicated their willingness to sacrifice and fight individually and corporately for the “things we cherish,” namely the “bright light of Liberty and Freedom which has become the heritage of all of us in our Country.”²³⁵

Conclusion

As this chapter demonstrates, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used these five “Fireside Chats” to invoke a unified citizenry. Arguing that sending U.S. aid to Great Britain would keep the United States out of the European war, he called on his audience to rally around his plan so that the social and economic fabric of the United States would be preserved. I argue that Roosevelt used five specific appeals to create and call forth an audience motivated by civic duty and willing to sacrifice individually and corporately for the good of the nation as a whole. First, he evoked public memory of the Great Depression and other key moments in U.S. history by employing visual images and *reciting* key phrases and sacred national texts. Second, Roosevelt identified the shared moral and national values of his audience, arguing that the peace and security U.S. citizens prized for themselves and for future generations could only be secured by Great Britain’s victory over Germany. Third, the president emphasized his commitment to the economic and social gains achieved during his presidency, pledging that these would be maintained even as the nation sped up production to supply Great Britain with military armaments. Fourth, Roosevelt appealed to the “patriotism of labor,” declaring that union leaders and U.S. workers were vital to the defense of the country and calling on them to place the security of their nation above factory strikes. Finally, the president equated a German victory in Great Britain with economic strangulation of the United States, painting a dismal picture of what would happen to the economic and social fabric of the United States if Germany conquered Great Britain.

Franklin D. Roosevelt used these strategies to call forth specific actions and attitudes from his audience. “It is my resolve and yours,” he said on May 26, 1940, “to build up our armed forces.”²³⁶ Regardless of how his audience felt about a military build-up prior to this “Fireside Chat,” the president now declared them “resolved” to strengthen the defenses of the United States. Indicating that he prayed “day and night” for “the restoration of peace in this mad world of ours,” he said that it was unnecessary for him to ask his audience to pray “in behalf of such a cause – for I know you are praying with me.”²³⁷ Introducing the Lend-Lease bill to the U.S. public in his “Fireside Chat” of December 29, 1940, Roosevelt confidently asserted that the United States had “the men – the skill – the wealth – and above all, the will” to “manufacture our defense material.” He continued, “I am confident that if and when production of consumer or luxury goods in certain industries requires the use of machines and raw materials that are essential for defense purposes, then such production must yield, and will gladly yield, to our primary and compelling purpose.”²³⁸ According to the president, production of goods deemed unessential to the “primary and compelling purpose” of the nation would “gladly yield” to make way for materials needed for the defense effort.

Roosevelt also emphasized themes of national unity, duty, and patriotism through these strategies. “We seek to keep war from our own firesides by keeping war from coming to the Americas,” he said. “It is serious enough and tragic enough to every American family in every state in the Union to live in a world that is torn by wars on other Continents . . . It is our national duty to use every effort to keep those wars out of the Americas.”²³⁹ The president also expressed his faith in the citizenry, indicating his

conviction that they would respond to his call for unity and sacrifice. “Let me make the simple plea that partisanship and selfishness be adjourned; and that national unity be the thought that underlies all others,” he said.²⁴⁰ In December 1940, President Roosevelt spoke to his audience of the “profound conviction” he had

that the American people are now determined to put forth a mightier effort than they have ever yet made to increase our production of all the implements of defense, to meet the threat to our democratic faith. As President of the United States I call for that national effort. I call for it in the name of this nation which we love and honor and which we are privileged and proud to serve. I call upon our people with absolute confidence that our common cause will greatly succeed.²⁴¹

Roosevelt directly set forth what he expected from his audience in this shared “national effort.” He had the authority to do so as “President of the United States,” but also as a citizen. He used the plural pronoun “we” to express that he, along with the rest of the citizenry, loved and honored the nation and was “privileged and proud to serve” it, regardless of the sacrifice. He called upon “our people,” the people that he and his audience were a part of, expressing his “absolute confidence that our common cause” would triumph. For Roosevelt, the United States’ attempt to keep out of the war by sending supplies to Great Britain would succeed primarily because the citizenry was united around a joint cause, a common effort.

CHAPTER THREE

“THE GREAT ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY”: FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT’S ARGUMENT FOR LEND-LEASE

The British people and their allies today are conducting an active war against this unholy alliance. Our own future security is greatly dependent on the outcome of that fight. Our ability to “keep out of war” is going to be affected by that outcome . . . We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.²⁴²

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 29, 1940

“Your Excellency,” wrote James M. Saunders in a letter to President Franklin D.

Roosevelt on the last day of 1940,

George Washington made us a nation, Abraham Lincoln preserved the nation from itself—and now it is your fearful and solemn duty to preserve for us against the threat of international banditry the priceless heritage that belongs to me and my fellow countrymen and our children, won and preserved by our fathers’ blood. The nation can feel safe with your hands at the helm . . .²⁴³

Responding to Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chat” of December 29, 1940, Mr. Saunders expressed his confidence in the president’s ability to protect the nation from the threat of war with Germany. Just as George Washington had led the country through its infancy and Abraham Lincoln had “preserved the nation” from destruction during a civil war, Roosevelt now had a “solemn duty” to preserve the country from this new threat to the “priceless heritage” of the United States of America. The president had used similar language in a previous “Fireside Chat,” stating that the country had a “high duty” to “defend the foundations laid down by our fathers . . . [and] build a life for generations yet

unborn.”²⁴⁴ In order to preserve the “foundations” and “priceless heritage” of the nation, Roosevelt set forth his plan for Lend-Lease to the citizenry in December 1940.

This chapter examines how President Franklin D. Roosevelt argued in his five pre-war “Fireside Chats” that sending economic and military aid to Great Britain was the best way to keep the United States out of war with Germany. The previous chapter discussed how Roosevelt made this argument by invoking an audience united by civic duty and patriotism. The third chapter of this thesis considers how Roosevelt addressed his audience’s fear of entanglements abroad and the pervasive isolationist sentiments of the U.S. public. It also examines how Roosevelt co-opted the claims of the America First Committee, a prominent isolationist organization who argued that supporting Great Britain would lead to U.S. involvement in the war. Instead, Roosevelt set forth his plan for Lend-Lease as a way to keep the country at peace and ensure Germany’s defeat.

In the following pages, I first consider how World War I and the failure of Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points contributed to the isolationist impulse of the U.S. public. I also introduce the America First Committee and the key leaders behind the movement. I then use Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification to discuss how Roosevelt supported his plan for sending aid to Great Britain by identifying with his audience’s desire to keep the nation out of war with Germany. Although the America First Committee portrayed Roosevelt as a “war lord” anxious to involve the United States in the European conflict, Roosevelt would not allow the committee to undermine his identification with the U.S. public. Instead, he reminded his audience of their shared values and national purpose and portrayed the Lend-Lease plan as a bill for peace.

Ultimately, I argue that the rhetoric of the America First Committee did not succeed against Roosevelt because the president was able to unify the U.S. public around the shared value of keeping the United States out of the European war.²⁴⁵

Historical Context

World War I and U.S. Disillusionment over “Entangling Alliances”

In his Pulitzer-Prize-winning history of the United States during the Great Depression and the Second World War, David M. Kennedy records the international climate at the end of the World War I. With “the fighting momentarily ended, humankind could still for a fleeting season dream the dreams of hope. Much of that hope was invested in the person of the American president, Woodrow Wilson.”²⁴⁶ Wilson had promised the citizenry that U.S. involvement in World War I would bring peace and democracy to the world. In his “War Message” to the U.S. Congress on April 2, 1917, Wilson said it was “a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance.” However, the president proclaimed that doing “right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts,” namely democracy, freedom of expression, and “the right for those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments.” For Wilson, this was the task to which the United States and its citizens must

dedicate [their] lives and . . . fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for

the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.²⁴⁷

In this message justifying U.S. entry into the war in Europe, the president committed the nation to “many months of fiery trial and sacrifice” not just for the defense of the United States but so that other countries might enjoy the same liberties and freedoms citizens of the United States enjoyed.²⁴⁸ Wilson’s decision to involve the United States in the affairs of other nations reflected a shift in U.S. foreign policy from George Washington’s caution against “permanent alliances” with other countries to the ever-expanding interpretations of the Monroe Doctrine.

In his farewell address to the nation, President George Washington warned his countrymen against developing “permanent alliances” with other nations. “It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world,” he said, although “[t]aking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defense posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.”²⁴⁹ Thomas Jefferson echoed Washington’s sentiments in his first inaugural address, calling for “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”²⁵⁰ Just twenty years later, following the War of 1812 and in response to Russia’s attempt to seize portions of what became British Columbia and Alaska through the Ukase of 1821, President James Monroe introduced a new policy in his State of the Union Address on December 23, 1823. The United States would now “consider any attempt [by another nation] to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.”²⁵¹ In this declaration, Monroe

asserted the right of the United States to respond with force to attempts by a foreign nation to assert control over any independent nation in the Western hemisphere.

The Monroe Doctrine continued to evolve under future U.S. presidents, with one of the most significant expansions coming under Theodore Roosevelt. In his Annual Message to Congress on December 6, 1904, Roosevelt asserted the Monroe Doctrine as a justification for U.S. intervention in the economic affairs of Cuba, Venezuela, and Panama. Such action was appropriate, Roosevelt argued, because the United States acted “in our own interest as well as in the interest of humanity at large” by defending these Central American nations from the threat of European colonialism. Furthermore, Roosevelt set forth a policy explaining under what circumstances the United States would take military action.

All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count on our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power . . . While they [the South and Central American nations] thus obey the primary laws of civilized society they may rest assured that they will be treated by us in a spirit of cordial and helpful sympathy. We would interfere with them only in the last resort, and then only if it became evident that their inability or unwillingness to do justice at home and abroad had violated the rights of the United States or had invited foreign aggression to the detriment of the entire body of American nations.²⁵²

In this statement, Roosevelt proclaimed that the United States would exercise “international police power” when any foreign power violated “the rights of the United States” or “invited foreign aggression” against North and South American countries. Just what constituted a violation of U.S. interests or by what means another nation would “invite foreign aggression” was unclear, and this ambiguity led to expanding interpretations of the doctrine by future U.S. presidents. Several used the Roosevelt Corollary to justify U.S. intervention in Cuba (1906-1909), Nicaragua (1909-1910, 1912-1925, and 1926-1933), Haiti (1915-1934), and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924).²⁵³

In his Fourth Annual Message, Theodore Roosevelt also defended the right of the United States to intervene in the affairs of other nations in pursuit of “the peace of justice.”

The goal to set before us as a nation, the goal which should be set before all mankind, is the attainment of the peace of justice, of the peace which comes when each nation is not merely safe-guarded in its own rights, but scrupulously recognizes and performs its duty toward others. Generally peace tells for righteousness; but if there is a conflict between the two, then our fealty is due first to the cause of righteousness. Unrighteous wars are common, and unrighteous peace is rare; but both should be shunned.²⁵⁴

Just thirteen years before Woodrow Wilson’s “War Message,” President Theodore Roosevelt expressed the United States’ role in maintaining peace and, even more important, the “cause of righteousness,” throughout the world. In 1917, Wilson used similar language to describe U.S. involvement in World War I.

We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall cheerfully make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

Just because we fight without rancor and without selfish object, seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples, we shall, I feel confident, conduct our operations as belligerents without passion and ourselves observe with proud punctilio the principles of right and fair play we profess to be fighting for.²⁵⁵

Stating that “the world must be made safe for democracy,” Wilson committed the United States to a war that, in the words of H.G. Wells, would end all wars.²⁵⁶

Eight months later, in an address to a joint session of Congress in January 1918, Wilson laid out “Fourteen Points” that would define “the world’s peace” at the end of the war. The goal of these points was to make the world

fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us.²⁵⁷

This “just and stable peace” would require Germany to “accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world—the new world in which we live—rather than a place of mastery.”²⁵⁸ But Wilson’s idealistic notions of a world without conflict did not materialize. Although he had “envisioned a liberal peace, a peace without victory, a peace that would magnanimously restore Germany to its rightful place in an open world of free trade and democracy,” the Versailles Treaty humiliated the Germans and forced them “to acknowledge sole responsibility for the outbreak of war.”²⁵⁹ Historian Charles Beard described the demoralizing impact Wilson’s failure had on the U.S. public.

As leader of “the great crusade” in 1917-1918, President Woodrow Wilson had held up before the American people a noble dream of a new and better world. In moving speeches and summary statements, he had told them that they were fighting a war for democracy, a war to end wars,

a war to crush German military despotism, a war to close the old era of secret diplomacy and imperialism, a war to establish permanent peace among the war-weary peoples of the earth. But the war had scarcely come to a close when stark events began to dissolve the dream. Even in the so-called settlement at Versailles only two or three of President Wilson's Fourteen Points for an ideal peace were realized. For the American people, the years that followed were years of deepening disillusionment.²⁶⁰

In addition to major disappointment at Wilson's failure to bring peace and democracy to Europe as he had promised, the U.S. public also saw World War I as a major cause of the Great Depression. Historian David Kennedy described the public sentiments after the 1929 stock market crash as "penny-pinching, isolationist, anti-European, anti-Wall Street." The U.S. public expressed "[i]ron-toothed insistence on full payment of the Allied war debts . . . [this] became not only a financial issue but a political and psychological issue as well, a totem of disgust with corrupt Europe, of regret at having intervened in the European war."²⁶¹ He continued,

No people came to believe more emphatically than the Americans that the Great War was an unalloyed tragedy, an unpardonably costly mistake never to be repeated. More than fifty thousand American doughboys had perished fighting on the western front, and to what avail? So far from being redeemed from American intervention, Europe swiftly slid back into its historic vices of authoritarianism and armed rivalry, while America slid back into its historic attitude of isolationism.²⁶²

Of this period, Charles Beard commented that "no trend in American public opinion between 1919 and 1941 was more marked than a diminishing confidence in the peace promises of the League of Nations and a growing resolve to keep the United States out of the next war in Europe."²⁶³

Isolationist Sentiments towards World War II

When Germany invaded Poland in early September 1939, Great Britain and France declared war on the Nazis. In a Gallup Poll conducted a week after the invasion, participants were asked if the United States should enter the war on behalf of Great Britain. Ninety-two percent of respondents said no.²⁶⁴ Roosevelt speechwriter Robert Sherwood explained that because of World War I, public opinion on staying out of the war was “much more nearly unanimous and more clearly expressed than it had been in 1914-1917.” He continued,

The American people were, in a way, more truly neutral in 1914 than they were twenty-five years later. However, Americans in 1939 were fortified with the experience that the previous generation had conspicuously lacked, the experience of involvement in European war, and they wanted no more of it. Their impulse to let “Europe stew in its own juice” was a very powerful one and an entirely understandable one. . . Thus, isolationist sentiment in 1939 was not limited to Americans of German birth or descent, or those who loved German music and admired German science and industry, or to those who were pure pacifists: it was representative of the entire American people save for the diminutive minority of those who believed that a victory for Hitler would put the security of our own constitutional democracy in deadly peril.²⁶⁵

The citizenry expressed these sentiments to President Roosevelt in their letters following his “Fireside Chats.” After the president’s September 3, 1939, radio address, Dr. Frederick Taylor of High Point, North Carolina, wrote that he had served as a medic during World War I in France. “I believed then, mistakenly, that it was a war to end war and a war to make the world safe for democracy . . . Now I know there is no such thing, and we all know it.” He applauded the president for his commitment to keeping the United States out of war, thanking him for his “resolve that millions of our young men will not be condemned to death because of selfish Old World diplomacy.”²⁶⁶ Mrs. J. A.

Ringis from Detroit, Michigan, explained that her husband served in World War I. “My hubby was in the last War, he is only 41 now and I wrote you once before telling you that I’d rather shoot him myself than let him go to War and I mean it.”²⁶⁷ Catherine McD. Larkin of New York referenced President Wilson and the previous international conflict. “We were deceived before within living memory by a Democratic President, who was more English than American. Let us not be betrayed again . . . We are not an English colony . . . We are Americans only, first and last.”²⁶⁸

President Roosevelt was eager to keep the United States out of the European war, but he also possessed a realistic picture of the threat Germany posed to the United States. In his September 3, 1939, “Fireside Chat,” he cautioned his audience that “passionately though we may desire detachment, we are forced to realize that every word that comes through the air, every ship that sails the sea, every battle that is fought does affect the American future.”²⁶⁹ Reflecting on this particular radio address, speechwriter Samuel Rosenman commented that in the president’s “first speech of the war, as part of his task of public enlightenment, he pointed out two hard facts. Both are accepted as obvious today; in 1939 they were not.” The first was that the United States “could not shrug off the European War as none of our business.” Rosenman called the second point “more subtle.”²⁷⁰ Roosevelt said that the nation would “remain a neutral nation,” but he specifically stated that he could not ask “every American [to] remain neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral has a right to take account of facts. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or close his conscience.”²⁷¹ Rosenman explained that although “the

original draft of this speech was prepared in the State Department, this frank admission of unneutrality was Roosevelt's own insertion."²⁷²

Roosevelt also attempted to explain to his audience that Europe and Asia were actually much closer to the United States than the vast majority of the U.S. public realized. In his December 29, 1940, "Fireside Chat," the president explained that the "broad expanse of the Atlantic and of the Pacific" was not enough to keep Germany from attacking the United States. He referred to "one point between Africa and Brazil [where] the distance [was] less from Washington than it [was] from Washington to Denver, Colorado – five hours for the latest type of bomber. And at the North end of the Pacific Ocean America and Asia almost touch each other." Even today, he continued, "we have planes that could fly from the British Isles to New England and back again without refueling."²⁷³ Here Roosevelt shattered assumptions with facts about how the world had been changed by technology and by specific geographic facts. The United States was not, as many of the U.S. public believed, removed and isolated from the rest of the world. If Germany defeated Great Britain, the Nazi Luftwaffe aircraft responsible for the bombing and destruction of London could fly to the United States to carry out similar attacks.

Roosevelt's unrivaled understanding of geography allowed him to communicate these facts to the U.S. public. "No one could equal the President in making geography clear," Rosenman wrote, and in his December 29, 1940, address, Roosevelt "showed how the Nazis could step from base to base right up to our borders."

He always dictated such passages himself, and we used to marvel that he was usually able to do it without even looking at a map. Sometimes, after

he had finished, he would pull down several of the roller maps in the back of his desk and check on his dictations. I do not remember that he ever had to make any serious corrections.²⁷⁴

Roosevelt's vast knowledge of world geography came from his boyhood trips to Europe with his parents and his own love of geography, history, and his favorite hobby, stamp collecting.

Moreover, Roosevelt's service as Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President Woodrow Wilson gave him a deeper understanding of just how important maintaining "freedom of the seas" was to national defense.²⁷⁵ Reflecting on the U.S. public's belief that the oceans would separate the United States from the troubles in Europe, Rosenman wrote,

It is difficult to put ourselves back in the atmosphere of 1940 when so many people really believed—and did not hesitate to say so—that we were fully protected by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans; that with our natural resources, we could get along very well by ourselves even if all Europe fell; and that with our great strength Hitler and the Japanese would never dare attack us. Those who are now too young to have lived in maturity through those days will find it hard to realize how startling some of Roosevelt's statements sounded to a great many American people in 1940 . . . Roosevelt's course was bold leadership then; but necessary leadership to awaken the American people to the danger abroad and to prepare them to meet it, even though it was still three thousand miles away.²⁷⁶

Thus the attitude of the citizenry towards Great Britain, France, and the European conflict was that of "a very interested spectator," a "sympathetic aloofness." Because the war took place on the other side of the world, most citizens believed it did not concern them. "It was distressingly clear," Rosenman wrote, that "the process of making the American people realize what an Axis victory would mean to *them* was not going to be an easy one or a short one. The years 1940 and 1941 were to provide the ultimate test of the ability of

Roosevelt to educate the American people before Pearl Harbor.”²⁷⁷ This was the challenge facing Roosevelt as the German advance across Europe intensified. At home, however, the president struggled not just against overwhelming isolationist sentiments of the U.S. public but the growing popularity of the America First Committee.²⁷⁸

The America First Committee

The America First Committee (AFC) was established in September 1940 by a group of U.S. politicians, businessmen, public intellectuals, newspaper owners, and several former military officials.²⁷⁹ Prominent members of the AFC included aviator Charles Lindbergh, newspaper magnate William Hearst, prominent historian Charles Beard, U.S. Senators Burton Wheeler (R-MT), Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA), Richard LaFollette (Progressive-WI), Gerald P. Nye (R-ND), and U.S. Representative Hamilton Fish (R-NY).²⁸⁰ In the fifteen months of the committee’s existence, the AFC attracted twenty U.S. senators and thirty-six U.S. representatives to speak on its behalf.²⁸¹ Conservative estimates place total membership of America First at almost 800,000, but the committee itself estimated that 1.2 million citizens joined its ranks. Between September 1940 and December 1941, the AFC held two hundred and nineteen rallies in one hundred and twenty-six cities throughout thirty-two states.²⁸² A *New York Times* article published the remarks historian Charles Beard made to the committee defining the goals of the organization:

The party of non-intervention represented by the America First Committee includes no “Appeasers,” no “ostrich isolationists,” no foreigners of any nationality in letter or spirit, and no pacifists. It believes that the foreign policy of the United States should be directed to the preservation of the peace and security of this nation in its continental zone of interests; that

the United States should not resort to any more measures verging in the direction of war outside its continental zone of interests; that measures should be adopted for the adequate defense of this continental zone of interests.²⁸³

In language relying on the principles of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, Beard argued that the United States should not take any action “outside its continental zone of interests.”

For Beard and the America First Committee, any U.S. efforts to support Great Britain or France would be a repetition of U.S. involvement in World War I twenty years earlier.

“We entered a war that was going to make the world safe for democracy and end all need for war in the future,” Charles Lindbergh reminded those gathered at an America First rally in 1941. “We do not accept the claim that . . . our way of life can be spread around the world by force . . . you and I in a new generation are faced with this choice again.”²⁸⁴

Beard also rejected the claim that members of the AFC were “ostrich isolationists,” a trope used to describe individuals who wanted to ignore the events in Germany. Labeling these isolationists “ostrich” alluded to the popular belief that ostriches stick their heads in the sand when afraid. Secretary of the Navy William Knox used this image to describe those who disapproved of the Lend-Lease policy: “[I]t is [time] for us to oppose the aggressor [Germany] with force, and either scare him off or defeat them . . . We cannot half fight this battle,” he declared. “This is the time for realism. We must face what is before us, and not adopt ostrich-like tactics.”²⁸⁵ Knox and others portrayed isolationists and the AFC as individuals afraid to face the facts. Roosevelt used similar language when he told the U.S. public that they could not escape the realities of the international situation by “pulling the covers over [their] heads” in fear.²⁸⁶ The America First Committee argued that they did not ignore facts. Instead, they

called for the United States to abstain from any actions that could lead to war with Germany.

Although the committee was formed officially in September 1940, the AFC did not make a public statement on Roosevelt's transfer of thirty U.S. destroyers to Great Britain in exchange for U.S. rights to British military bases until December 1940.²⁸⁷ In fact, the destroyer-for-bases deal was released to the press on September 3, the day before the organization announced its formation to the U.S. public.²⁸⁸ However, many isolationist members of Congress accused Roosevelt of assuming dictatorial powers because he had transferred the destroyers to Great Britain through an executive order, acting without congressional authorization. U.S. Representative Oscar Youngdahl (R-MN) stated that he considered Roosevelt's act "a serious usurpation of congressional power and one of the most serious threats to our democracy for that reason."²⁸⁹ U.S. Senator D. Worth Clark (D-ID), called it "one of the latest steps on the road to inevitable war."²⁹⁰ Far from keeping the nation out of the European war, U.S. Representative Hamilton Fish (R-NY) declared that "Hitler would be perfectly within the law to declare war on us tomorrow" as a result of Roosevelt's decision.²⁹¹ Between September 1940 and December 1941, the committee directly opposed President Roosevelt's foreign policy initiatives to repeal measures of the Neutrality Act, U.S. House Resolution 1776 (the Lend-Lease Bill), and U.S. navy patrols in the Atlantic Ocean. They argued that Great Britain could never withstand the German attacks and that sending U.S. aid to the British would ultimately lead to U.S. involvement in the war.

Commenting on the America First Committee in his memoirs, Samuel Rosenman reflected his opinion of the organization and that of the Roosevelt administration. This “minority of the American people” opposed to Roosevelt’s plan for sending aid to Great Britain and strengthening U.S. defenses included

the defeatists who preached that Hitler was invincible and could not be beaten. It included the appeasers who thought that the best way to get along in the world was to appease Hitler. It included some businessmen and financiers who urged that Americans could do business with Hitler. It included a small number of conscientious but misguided American citizens who thought that the way of peace was to put their heads in the sand and refuse to look at the storms abroad. It included all of the bundists, fascists and – before the war between Russia and Germany – all the subversive Communists. It also included all the group in the United States committed to racial intolerance and bigotry. This minority urged that the thing for the United States to do was to insist upon a negotiated peace, and thereafter to try and get along, in a business and in a diplomatic way, as well as possible, albeit humbly, with Hitler. For, according to them, Great Britain and the rest of the world were as good as conquered.²⁹²

To Roosevelt, the America First Committee opposed the very things that he argued would keep the United States out of war in Europe.

The president and members of his administration also took elements of the AFC attacks personally, particularly those made by Charles Lindbergh. Between 1936 and 1939, Lindbergh made several trips to Germany at the invitation of the German government. During one such visit in 1937, the German Air Ministry showed Lindbergh production reports which claimed that the nation was producing 800 airplanes a month, with 10,000 already built and air-ready.²⁹³ Although these statistics were later disproved as a gross exaggeration, at the time they seemed accurate and contributed to the America First Committee’s claim that Great Britain stood no chance against the mighty German

Luftwaffe. After returning to the United States in 1939, Lindbergh began to oppose the president's policies publicly. On May 18, 1940, Lindbergh delivered a nationwide radio address in which he accused the Roosevelt administration of creating "defense hysteria" and argued that the nation was not threatened by a foreign invasion unless "American people bring it on through their own quarreling and meddling with affairs abroad."²⁹⁴ The day after Lindbergh's speech, Roosevelt declared to Henry Morgenthau: "If I should die tomorrow, I want you to know this. I am convinced that Lindbergh is a Nazi."²⁹⁵

In a press conference on April 25, 1941, without mentioning his name, Roosevelt implicitly compared Lindbergh to the appeasers at Valley Forge who "pleaded with Washington to quit, because he 'couldn't win'" and the Copperheads during the Civil War who told Lincoln to make peace with the Confederates.²⁹⁶ Two days later, Lindbergh announced that he was resigning from the Army Air Corps because his "President and superior officer" had questioned his "loyalty," "character," and "motives."²⁹⁷ On May 2, Roosevelt advisor Harry Hopkins received a letter from Herbert Swope, a New York journalist and friend of the president. Swope had composed a draft someone in the administration might send to Lindbergh responding to his resignation. Hopkins read the draft and passed it along to Press Secretary Stephen Early. "Dear Steve," Hopkins wrote, "It seems to be a good idea, unless it is too late, but I have an idea that this Lindbergh thing is going to crop up again and somebody might have an opportunity to write a letter somewhat like this."²⁹⁸ Swope's letter, considered a "good idea" by one of Roosevelt's closest advisors and personal friends, reveals why the president and members of his administration viewed Charles Lindbergh as such a threat.

“Dear Mr. Lindbergh,” the letter began, with “Mr.” heavily underlined in pencil, indicating Lindbergh’s demotion from Colonel to an ordinary citizen,

. . . I point out that the public interest would have been better served had you resigned several months ago. Since that time the declared and defined policy of the government, binding upon its Commander-in-Chief and upon all the members of the active and reserve establishment, has been the execution of the Lend-Lease Bill.

To that you stand opposed. Against it you have fought and are fighting. You have preached a defeatism that is as dangerous as it is untrue. You have been bitterly critical of your government and scornful of Great Britain and other countries the United States is seeking to aid. But you have not uttered a single word of criticism of the Nazis from the time you received your first high decoration at the order of the Nazi Fuehrer and from the hands of his second in command.

It is obvious that such an attitude as yours cannot be countenanced within the Service, although it is unquestionably your right as a private citizen.

This Department expects every man holding a Commission to give unswerving loyalty to his country, to his flag and to his Commander-in-Chief. Since you confessed yourself incapable of so doing, your resignation was accepted to take effect immediately.²⁹⁹

According to Swope’s draft, Lindbergh’s direct opposition to the Lend-Lease Bill, the “declared and defined policy of the government,” positioned him as fighting against the Roosevelt administration and his cries of “defeatism” were both “untrue” and ultimately “dangerous” to the morale of the nation. Although never released to the public, the tone and content of this letter illumines how the Roosevelt administration viewed vocal critics of Lend-Lease.

Despite his personal aversion to Lindbergh and the claims of the America First Committee, however, Roosevelt never mentioned the aviator or the organization by name in his “Fireside Chats.” Doing so would have acknowledged their importance and given

the AFC equal status within the president's speech. Ever the master rhetorician, Roosevelt would not allow the committee to become a recognized and reputable opposition that might undermine his identification with the U.S. public. Instead, he co-opted their anti-war views by arguing that sending U.S. aid to Great Britain was the best way to "keep war from our own firesides."³⁰⁰

Franklin D. Roosevelt's Argument for Lend-Lease

President Roosevelt introduced his Lend-Lease plan to the public through a press conference and a "Fireside Chat" in December 1940. This plan, which was designed to allow the United States to send military and economic aid to Great Britain without repealing the Neutrality Laws, was a daring policy between isolationism and declaring war on Germany. Roosevelt explained the plan through a homely simile that shrank his bold move to a familiar exchange between people living in the same neighborhood. He compared lending military supplies to Great Britain to lending a hose to one's neighbor if his house were on fire.³⁰¹

If he can take my garden hose and connect it up with his hydrant, I may help him to put out his fire. Now, what do I do? I don't say to him before that operation, "Neighbor, my garden hose cost me \$15; you have to pay me \$15 for it." What is the transaction that goes on? I don't want \$15—I want my garden hose back after the fire is over. All right. If it goes through the fire all right, intact, without any damage to it, he gives it back to me and thanks me very much for the use of it. But suppose it gets smashed up—holes in it—during the fire; we don't have to have too much formality about it, but I say to him, "I was glad to lend you that hose; I see I can't use it any more, it's all smashed up." He says, "How many feet of it were there?" I tell him, "There were 150 feet of it." He says, "All right, I will replace it." Now, if I get a nice garden hose back, I am in pretty good shape.³⁰²

Roosevelt described the United States' lending of valuable military weapons as a simple trade between friends. In doing so, the president allowed his audience to visualize the exchange as one they might make with their next door neighbor. Roosevelt simplified his plan by explaining a complicated and potentially confusing congressional policy in terms to which any member of his audience could relate. Implicit in this comparison was that any citizen would gladly lend a hose to a neighbor not just out of good will, but also out of self-preservation because a house on fire threatens nearby structures. By lending one's neighbor a hose to put out a fire, the lender protects his/her own home and family.³⁰³

Two weeks later in his December 29, 1940, "Fireside Chat," Roosevelt made this linkage explicit:

Our future security is greatly dependent on the outcome of [Great Britain's fight against Germany]. Our ability to "keep out of war" is going to be affected by that outcome. Thinking in terms of today and tomorrow, I make the direct statement to the American people that there is far less chance of the United States getting into war if we do all we can now to support the nations defending themselves against attack by the Axis than if we acquiesce in their defeat, submit tamely to an Axis victory, and wait our turn to be the object of attack in another war later on.³⁰⁴

The best way to avoid war with Germany, Roosevelt argued, was to contribute to the defense of Great Britain. He explained that lending U.S. destroyers, tanks, guns, and munitions to Great Britain would enable the British to defend their country and, therefore, forestall need for the United States to defend itself militarily.

The people of Europe who are defending themselves do not ask us to do their fighting. They ask us for the implements of war, the planes, the tanks, the guns, the freighters which will enable them to fight for their liberty and for our security. Emphatically we must get these weapons to them, get them to them in sufficient volume and quickly enough, so that we and our children will be saved the agony and suffering of war which others have had to endure.

Here Roosevelt addressed those in his audience who argued that sending military weapons and aid to Great Britain meant that the United States had entered the war against Germany. Roosevelt insisted on a more subtle distinction. The British did not ask the United States “to do their fighting.” Instead, the supplies the United States lent them would “enable them to fight for their liberty and for our security.” “Our national policy is not directed toward war,” Roosevelt stated explicitly. “Its sole purpose is to keep war away from our country and away from our people.” He called any rumors of “sending an American Expeditionary Force outside our own borders” a “deliberate untruth.” The United States, Roosevelt declared, “must be the great arsenal of democracy,” supplier of equipment and supplies rather than an army or police force.³⁰⁵

Roosevelt supported his plan for sending aid to Great Britain in this “Fireside Chat” and others by identifying with his audience’s desire to keep the nation out of war with Germany. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke describes how a speaker uses identification to move his/her audience from one social or political position to another. Identification and persuasion are linked inextricably, Burke says, because the speaker persuades his/her audience by “causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker’s interests; and the speaker draws on the identification of interests to establish rapport between himself/herself and his/her audience.”³⁰⁶ These shared “interests” function as “the means of persuasion available for any given situation,” because “the ideas are so related that they have in them, either explicitly or implicitly, inducements to some social and political choices rather than others.”³⁰⁷ For Burke, identification is the process by which a speaker persuades his/her audience to identify with his/her interests. When the

speaker and his/her audience individually identify with “common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, and attitudes,” these shared elements make them “consubstantial” with each other.³⁰⁸ In what follows, I consider how Roosevelt used identification to convince his audience of the importance of sending aid to Great Britain in three specific ways: (1) by reassuring the citizenry that he shared their aversion to entering the war; (2) appealing to their concern for national security; (3) and portraying Lend-Lease as a policy to promote peace. I examine each of Roosevelt’s rhetorical strategies and discuss how the America First Committee attempted to undermine the president’s position and overall identification with the U.S. public through their rhetoric.³⁰⁹

Unifying the U.S. Public through Identification with Them

In these pre-war “Fireside Chats,” Roosevelt unified the citizenry through his identification with their beliefs and attitudes. The president encouraged his audience to identify with him through their shared goal of keeping the nation out of war. Roosevelt used this shared value “to establish rapport between himself and his audience,” the U.S. public. By arguing that sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to achieve their shared goal—to keep the nation out of war—Roosevelt used these shared “interests” as “the means of persuasion” to convince his audience.³¹⁰ Because Lend-Lease would provide Great Britain with the military and economic resources it needed to defend itself against Germany, the U.S. public had every incentive to support the plan because it supported their shared “interest” of keeping out of the European war.

By 1939, Roosevelt had established the “Fireside Chat” as a direct method to communicate with the U.S. public, and these radio addresses had become a source of

national unity and identification during Roosevelt's presidency. As noted in chapter one, the president saw these "Fireside Chats" as a way to communicate directly and candidly with the U.S. public. Historian James MacGregor Burns argues that the "Fireside Chats" were Roosevelt's "most important link with the people" and describes some of the ways in which his delivery of them facilitated their linkage:

Read in cold newspaper print the next day, these talks seemed somewhat stilted and banal. Heard in the parlor, they were fresh, intimate, moving. The radio chats were effective largely because Roosevelt threw himself into the role of a father talking with his great family. He made a conscious effort to visualize the people he was talking to. He forgot the microphone; as he talked, "head would nod and his hands would move in simple, natural, comfortable gestures," [Secretary of Labor Frances] Perkins noted. "His face would smile and light up as though he were actually sitting on the front porch or parlor with them." And his listeners would nod and smile and laugh with him.³¹¹

Unlike his addresses to the U.S. Congress or speeches to specific audiences across the country, Roosevelt used the "Fireside Chats" to indicate his intention to speak directly *with*, and not just to, the U.S. public. As such, the nature and tone of these radio addresses supported Roosevelt's attempt to identify with the shared values of the citizenry.

Roosevelt also used images of family to identify with and thus unify his audience. In his December 29, 1940, "Fireside Chat," Roosevelt called on his audience to do away with "fears and illusions. On this Sabbath evening, in our homes in the midst of our American families, let us calmly consider what we have done and what we must do."³¹² His reference to "our American families" referred not only to the individual family units gathered around their radios, but to the collective "American family" listening to the comforting voice of their national "father." By speaking in this paternal voice, Roosevelt

also identified members of the audience to each other and with each other. They were not just individuals or families listening to their president over the radio, but members of a national family joined together in fighting to protect and preserve their shared “way of life.”³¹³

When Roosevelt addressed the U.S. public hours after Great Britain and France declared war on Germany in his September 3, 1939, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt admitted that he did know what would happen in Europe:

I myself cannot and do not prophesy the course of the events abroad – and the reason is that because I have of necessity such a complete picture of what is going on in every part of the world, that I do not dare do so. And the other reason is that I think it is honest for me to be honest with the people of the United States.³¹⁴

Through this honest and transparent admission, Roosevelt communicated that he, even as President of the United States, could not predict the turn of events on the international scene. However, he encouraged his audience to unite around things that were certain, and specifically the values they shared as a citizenry. “Some things we do know. Most of us in the United States believe in spiritual values . . . The overwhelming masses of our people seek peace – peace at home, and the kind of peace in other lands which will not jeopardize our peace at home.” Roosevelt expressed the U.S. public’s shared desire for peace and called his audience to rally around these “certain ideas and certain ideals of national safety.”³¹⁵

Whereas President Roosevelt spoke as the national leader, commander in chief, and “father talking with his great family,” the America First Committee, a “divergent many,” struggled to present a clear, unified message to the citizenry.³¹⁶ General Robert

E. Wood wrote that “[v]irtually the only point on which there was complete agreement was that the United States should not enter the European War.”³¹⁷ Another member commented that the AFC was characterized by negativity. “To me, it is incongruous to be anti-anything. Instead, we must be for something. We have fought sham battles to a point where the people have identified us as anti-Lend-Lease, anti-Neutrality, and anti-Semitic.”³¹⁸ Because the AFC appeared to be “anti-everything,” the public was drawn to the positive, proactive policies that Roosevelt proposed.

The America First Committee attempted to subvert Roosevelt’s image as a candid, caring friend by charging that Roosevelt was deceitful in his speeches and motivated by a lust for power. In a radio address broadcast on CBS entitled “Americanism vs. Internationalism,” U.S. Representative Hamilton Fish (R-NY) warned that no American “should underestimate the power and influence of President Roosevelt and his skill in the use of mass propaganda, emotionalism, and war hysteria.”³¹⁹ Philip LaFollette, the former governor of Wisconsin and brother of U.S. Senator Robert LaFollette, accused the president of using “cunning” and “deceitful phrases.”³²⁰ Charles Lindbergh called Roosevelt “glib, hypocritical, and deceitful.”³²¹ By labeling the president as someone who could not be trusted, these members of the America First Committee attempted to undermine his credibility and thus encourage the U.S. public to reject his plan for Lend-Lease. Lindbergh attacked Roosevelt directly in September 1941, suggesting that he was a “witch doctor” who had seduced the U.S. public to swallow the “deadly pills of war.”³²² The president was more concerned with “power” than with “freedom,” a value which should characterize a democratic government.

“Power and more power for a power-mad Administration is the watchword of the day. Behind a false cloak of [p]atriotism, they clip the wings of the American Eagle to feather their own nests,” declared Robert F. Jones in a radio address to the nation in August 1941.³²³

This charge that Roosevelt’s “power-mad Administration . . . clip[ped] the wings of the American Eagle to feather their own nests” was a direct quote from Roosevelt’s January 6, 1941, State of the Union Address. However, Roosevelt had used the image to describe those who urged the United States and Great Britain to make peace with Germany.

No realistic American can expect from a dictator’s peace international generosity, or return of true independence, or world disarmament, or freedom of expression, or freedom of religion – or even good business. Such a peace would bring no security for us or for our neighbors. Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

As a nation, we may take heart in the fact that we are soft-hearted; but we cannot afford to be soft-headed. We must always be wary of those who with sounding brass and tinkling symbol preach the ‘ism’ of appeasement. We must especially beware of that small group of selfish men who would clip the wings of the American eagle in order to feather their own nests.”³²⁴

According to speechwriter Samuel Rosenman, this phrase was meant to describe the “appeasers who wanted to do business with Hitler at the expense of American security.”³²⁵ These appeasers were the America First Committee. Borrowing this clever phrase from Roosevelt himself, the AFC implied that the president wanted to weaken the symbol of U.S. democracy, the American eagle, by assuming unconstitutional powers and leading the nation into war.

The America First Committee also attempted to reawaken fears of dictatorship by charging that passage of Lend-Lease would give President Roosevelt “a greater independent power than was ever enjoyed by any war lord, anywhere, anytime.”³²⁶ In an attempt to defeat the Lend-Lease Bill in the House and Senate, the America First Committee asked all local chapters to send telegrams to their congressional representatives in protest. They sent approved language to these chapters, asking that telegrams include statements such as “reject the *dictatorship bill*,” “democracy must not be compromised,” and “I don’t want to go to *war*. Kill the *dictatorship bill*. No compromise” (italics original).³²⁷ By charging that the Lend-Lease bill would create a dictatorship and threaten democracy, the America First Committee attempted to undermine Roosevelt’s leadership and scuttle his efforts to send aid to Great Britain.

Appealing to Their Concern for National Security

In his five pre-war “Fireside Chats,” President Franklin D. Roosevelt sought to identify with the citizenry by reaffirming his resolve to defend the United States against the German threat. The previous chapter discussed how Roosevelt used these shared values to invoke an audience unified by civic duty and patriotism. The president used this same strategy to rally the U.S public around his plan for Lend-Lease. In his September 3, 1939, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt reminded his audience that he shared their hatred of war. “I hope the United States will keep out of this war,” he said. “I believe that it will. And I give you assurance and reassurance that every effort of your [g]overnment will be directed toward that end. As long as it remains within my power to prevent,” he promised, “there will be no blackout of peace in the United States.”³²⁸

Roosevelt alluded to the government-imposed blackouts in Great Britain and the hundreds of German air bombers flying overhead. Just as the swarming Nazi Luftwaffe brought terror to the skies of London and forced the British to extinguish their lights, Roosevelt acknowledged that the U.S. public feared that the European war would force them to smother their desire for peace and safety. Under his watch, he promised to do all he could to keep the nation at peace. One year later, Roosevelt presented Lend-Lease as the best way to accomplish this goal.

Introducing the Lend-Lease plan to the public in his “Fireside Chat” of December 29, 1940, Roosevelt said the policy was designed to “keep you now, and your children later, and your grandchildren much later, out of a last-ditch war for the preservation of American independence and all of the things that American independence means to you and to me and to ours.”³²⁹ As president, Roosevelt stated that he had a responsibility to keep the nation out of a “last-ditch war.” Through careful and deliberate planning, the nation could preserve “American independence” by sending aid to Great Britain; immediate action now could prevent formal, military involvement in the European war later. Roosevelt also emphasized that the United States had a duty to “build and defend” the “promise of America” for future generations and for the world. “We build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind. Ours is a high duty, a noble task.”³³⁰ The “promise of America” and this “way of life” reflected the idea that the United States had a special mission in the world. “We have certain ideas and certain ideals of national safety and we must act to preserve that safety today and to preserve the safety of our children in future years.” This desire for national safety was “bound up with the safety of

the Western Hemisphere and of the seas adjacent thereto.”³³¹ Thus, in order to defend the “way of life” that Roosevelt and his audience shared, the president argued that sending aid to Great Britain was the surest way to protect it.

Roosevelt also portrayed Lend-Lease as “battle” defending the very foundations and traditions of the United States, a struggle that each and every member of the U.S. public could take part. In 1941, the U.S. Government Printing Office published a fifty-four page booklet entitled “The Battle of 1776: Statements on the Lend-Lease Bill by the President and the Secretaries of State, War and Navy.” The booklet contained the printed text of Roosevelt’s December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” his January 6, 1941, “State of the Union Address” (also known as the “Four Freedoms” speech), and statements made by Secretaries Stimson, Hull, and Knox. The last few pages of the booklet contained the original text of H.R. 1776, an act “to promote the defense of the United States,” according to the introductory remarks. The title, “The Battle of 1776,” was a clear reference to the Revolutionary War and the U.S. struggle for freedom from British tyranny. Interestingly enough, however, this new “Battle of [H.R.] 1776” was another struggle against tyranny through sending military and economic aid to Great Britain, the very nation the United States had fought in the Revolutionary War.³³² Now, Roosevelt reminded his audience, the British were friends and “Great Britain and the British Empire are today the spearhead of resistance to world conquest. And they are putting up a fight which will live forever in the story of human gallantry.”³³³ The citizenry could participate in this “battle” by supporting Lend-Lease, for such action would enable the British to ward off the German assault on freedom and individual liberty worldwide.

Where Roosevelt portrayed Lend-Lease as a way to keep the United States out of war with Germany and save the citizenry from “the agony and suffering of war which others have had to endure,” the America First Committee maintained that the country should adhere to founding principles and remain free from European entanglements.³³⁴ To justify non-intervention, the AFC also referred to the nation’s past, echoing the words of George Washington to avoid “permanent alliances” with other nations and Thomas Jefferson’s warning to maintain “entangling alliances with none.”³³⁵ The America First Committee argued that the United States of America had a destiny to fulfill, to preserve the “American way.”³³⁶ The nation could only fulfill its destiny by remaining outside the European conflict.

Echoing John Winthrop’s ideal of the United States as a shining “city on a hill,” America First speaker Wilbur Helm explained that if the United States avoided entanglement, it would stand as an example to the world after the Europeans had exhausted themselves in the war. In language strikingly similar to John Winthrop’s “Model of Christian Charity” in which Winthrop cautioned his audience that the Massachusetts Bay Colony would be like a “city on a hill” to the rest of the world, the America First Committee characterized the United States as a beacon of hope to the suffering peoples of Europe.³³⁷

When, across the sea, the warring countries have finally bombed each other’s cities, when they have destroyed their churches, when they have crushed to ashes their great works of art, when they have destroyed their institutions of learning, when their factories have been leveled to the ground, finally out of the anguish of it all surely there will come a time when the starving people of the conquered lands and the distressed, weary, war-torn and burdened people of the victors as well will cry out: “Isn’t

there a land somewhere on earth where the people's wishes will be respected and observed?"

. . . And if America is still solvent, we can send the word back across the ocean that we are ready to feed and to clothe and to rebuild the homes of the distressed people of the world. That is America's destiny.³³⁸

To achieve this status, the America First Committee argued, the United States had to maintain its "purity." U.S. Representative Martin Dies (D-TX) argued that

Americans have evolved an economic and political system far superior to the best that Europe has to offer. Under our system we have grown and prospered beyond the dreams of our founders. The American way, not the European way, promises steady advancement toward the more abundant life. The moment we abandon the principles of Americanism in favor of the totalitarian ideologies of Europe, that moment we begin the downward course toward the kind of dictatorships which have plagued Europeans for centuries.³³⁹

To maintain the superiority of "the American way," the AFC proclaimed that the nation needed to commit itself to isolationism. By keeping the country out of the European war, the United States would retain the qualities that made it a beacon for the world.

The America First Committee's rhetoric was undermined, however, because Roosevelt argued that by sending aid to Great Britain, the United States would be defending its "way of life" from the threat of German attack and invasion. Roosevelt cited the Monroe Doctrine in his December 29, 1940, "Fireside Chat," arguing that the policy was "a measure of defense in the face of a threat against this hemisphere by an alliance in Continental Europe."³⁴⁰ Lend-Lease was not an example of what Jefferson and Washington called "entangling" or "permanent alliances." Instead, it was a step to ensure the safety and security of the United States and keep the nation out of the entanglements of the European war.

H.R. 1776: A Policy to Promote Peace

Keenly aware that his audience wanted to remain out of the European war at all costs, Roosevelt depicted Lend-Lease as the surest way to keep the nation at peace. In his December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt acknowledged that there was “risk in any course we may take,” but argued that “the course that I advocate [Lend-Lease] involves the least risk now and the greatest hope for world peace in the future.”³⁴¹ However, the president emphasized that securing this peace could not be accomplished by ignoring the German threat to the United States or settling for a “negotiated peace” with the Nazis. In May of 1940, he had acknowledged the fears of those U.S. citizens who hoped that if they ignored the events of Europe, the United States would not be threatened.

There are many among us who in the past closed their eyes to events abroad – because they believed in utter good faith what some of their fellow Americans told them – that what was taking place in Europe was none of our business; that no matter what happened over there, the United States could always pursue its peaceful and unique course in the world.

There are many among us who closed their eyes, from lack of interest or lack of knowledge; honestly and sincerely thinking that the many hundreds of miles of salt water made the American Hemisphere so remote that the people of North and Central and South America could go on living in the midst of their vast resources without reference to, or danger from, other Continents of the world.³⁴²

According to Roosevelt, these citizens had “closed their eyes” to the reality of world geography. He recognized that they had “closed their eyes” in “utter good faith,” trusting the opinions of others or “honestly and sincerely” because of a “lack of interest or lack of knowledge.” There were also “a few” partisans opposed to all his policies.

[T]here are a few among us who have deliberately and consciously closed their eyes because they were determined to be opposed to their government, its foreign policy and every other policy, to be partisan, and to believe that anything that the [g]overnment did was wholly wrong.³⁴³

The president's tone became more stern when addressing these opponents whose views he refuted by recalling recent events: "To those who have closed their eyes for any of these reasons," he said, the Nazi attacks on Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France during the spring months of 1940 brought "the shattering of many illusions. They have lost the illusion that we are remote and isolated and, therefore, secure against the dangers from which no other land is free."³⁴⁴ Roosevelt argued that the frightening German assault on European nations, including countries friendly with the United States, should awaken the U.S. public to the grave dangers facing the Western hemisphere. Even those who had opposed Roosevelt's leadership had to open their eyes to the reality of the German threat.

Roosevelt wholeheartedly rejected any possibility of a "negotiated peace" with Germany. Those who believed that "we can save our own skins by shutting our eyes to the fate of other nations" or that "we can and should become the friends and even the partners of the Axis powers" Roosevelt called "American appeasers." They ignored

the warning to be found in the fate of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and France. They tell you that the Axis powers are going to win anyway; that all of this bloodshed in the world could be saved, that the United States might just as well throw its influence into the scale of a dictated peace, and get the best out of it that we can.

They call it a "negotiated peace." Nonsense! Is it a negotiated peace if a gang of outlaws surrounds your community and on threat of extermination makes you pay tribute to save your own skins?

Such a dictated peace would be no peace at all. It would be only another armistice, leading to the most gigantic armament race and the most devastating trade wars in all history. And in these contests the Americas would offer the only real resistance to the Axis powers.³⁴⁵

Any negotiation with Hitler, a dictator set on conquering Europe and, eventually, the Western Hemisphere, would undermine the security of the United States and repeat the history of the First World War. Describing the Nazi powers as a “gang of outlaws,” Roosevelt alluded to the United States as a pioneering “community.” The U.S. public frequently thought of themselves as pioneers, pushing past the established boundaries of the United States to harness the “Wild West.” This image of the Germans as “outlaws” also resonated with the audience since the genre of Western motion pictures became popular in the late 1930s. As any viewer of a Western movie knows, outlaws do not negotiate, and if they do, they do so under false pretenses. Therefore, when Roosevelt used this imagery to describe Nazi Germany, the idea of negotiating with outlaws seemed ridiculous and a successful “negotiated peace” absurd.

Roosevelt also argued that those who called for a “negotiated peace” were willfully ignorant.

The experience of the past two years has proven beyond doubt that no nation can appease the Nazis. No man can tame a tiger into a kitten by stroking it. There can be no appeasement with ruthlessness. There can be no reasoning with an incendiary bomb. We know now that a nation can have peace with the Nazis only at the price of total surrender.³⁴⁶

Roosevelt’s vivid imagery captured the threat posed by the Nazis and made appeasers appear to be naive children. This image was twofold. First, the president portrayed isolationists as oblivious to the reality of the situation; Germany was not a kitten easily tamed. Second, Roosevelt reminded his audience that Germany waited for an

opportunity to pounce on its prey. By attempting to tame, appease, or reason with the Nazis, the United States put itself in grave danger. Instead, Roosevelt argued that the United States should do all it could to help Great Britain prevail in its fight against Germany.

The America First Committee argued that Roosevelt's Lend-Lease proposal would lead the nation into war and instead called for Great Britain to negotiate with the Germans. At a rally in Chicago in April 1941, Senator Burton K. Wheeler (D-MT) charged that Roosevelt had "destroyed the chance" for peace in Europe.³⁴⁷ To counteract that, Wheeler called for "public petitions" to the Pope and to "Protestant leaders everywhere" demanding "that humanity lay down the sword of brutality and assume its ways of peace and happiness." According to a report in the *New York Times*, Wheeler's remarks were "punctuated by shouts of 'Down with Britain!'"³⁴⁸ In July 1941, General Robert Wood, the chairman of the America First Committee, advocated that Britain should make peace with Hitler. The committee was "unalterably opposed" to the United States joining the war on the side of the British, and they "advise[d] England to make a negotiated peace" with Germany.³⁴⁹

Hoping to appeal to the U.S. public's desire to stay out of the European conflict, the AFC characterized Lend-Lease in dire terms as a stark choice between war and peace. Chicago lawyer and America First Committee board member Clay Judson expressed this either-or choice, writing that "the question is between war and peace, and all other arguments are of importance only as they relate to that important issue."³⁵⁰ Several members of the U.S. Congress who also spoke on behalf of the America First Committee

shared this view.³⁵¹ U.S. Representative James O'Connor (D-MT) said he could not and would not “by my vote pass a bill that, to me, ignores the will of the American people . . . to keep us out of this war[, a bill] that puts this nation on the brink of disaster such as was never known.”³⁵² U.S. Representative Gerald Landis (R-IN) described the situation as a slippery slope leading inevitably to war. “We are being edged into the war without the masses’ knowledge. The course we are pursuing is bound to involve us in war. If we aid Britain short of war and beyond the limits of the Neutrality Act, it ultimately means war.”³⁵³ In a radio address to the nation, Philip LaFollette declared that Roosevelt’s plan for Lend-Lease was a “clear, emphatic, unequivocal statement that we will make and deliver weapons of war in sufficient quantity to insure an overwhelming British victory. That means war.”³⁵⁴

In an address delivered at the Neutrality Conference of the America First Chapter Chairmen and Delegates in Washington, Philip LaFollette emphasized the choice to send aid to Great Britain as a choice between war and peace.

It is no longer a question of the Republic Party and the Democratic Party. Today the alignment is between the War Party and the American Party. The War Party maintains that American freedom is to be won or lost on the battlefields of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The American party maintains that the future welfare and happiness of our people will not be determined by the defeat or victory of any nation anywhere on earth, but by what we—we in America—do to protect and extend freedom and security of our people here.³⁵⁵

Roosevelt led the “War Party”; the America First Committee represented the “American Party.” Any support for Roosevelt or his policies, therefore, became, support for entry into the European war. Despite the committee’s attempts to label Roosevelt and his policies as leading to war, the U.S. public did not agree.

In September 1941, when asked if the United States should enter the war against Germany, eighty-seven percent of respondents said no. In the same poll, however, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with “Lindbergh’s viewpoint on aid to Britain and foreign policy.” Fourteen percent said they agreed and sixty-four percent said they disagreed. The poll also posed the following question: “President Roosevelt says that if the United States is to be a free and democratic country, the Nazi government in Germany must be destroyed. Do you agree, or disagree?” Seventy-four percent of respondents expressed their support for Roosevelt’s statement.³⁵⁶ The freedom and democracy of the United States ultimately depended on Germany’s defeat; thus, the nation needed to do everything it could to help Great Britain prevail against the Nazi attacks.

Conclusion

In his December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat” announcing Lend-Lease to the U.S. public, Roosevelt reminded his audience of the danger to the United States posed by Germany. Although the United States did not seek war with the Nazis, Germany believed that U.S. democracy was a threat to their system of government. Roosevelt quoted the recent words of Adolf Hitler: “It was only three weeks ago their leader stated this: ‘There are two worlds that stand opposed to each other . . . [w]ith this world we cannot ever reconcile ourselves.’” Roosevelt commented, “In other words, the Axis not merely admits but the Axis proclaims that there can be no ultimate peace between their philosophy of government and our philosophy of government.”³⁵⁷ Because Nazi Germany was the enemy of the United States, Roosevelt argued that any debates over

isolationism or interventionism should be abandoned. Instead, all national energy and focus should be directed to ensuring that the nation remained out of the European war.

“Frankly and definitely there is danger ahead,” he said, “danger against which we must prepare. But we well know that we cannot escape danger, or the fear of danger, by crawling into bed and pulling the covers over our heads.” Once again, Roosevelt used a familiar image to characterize his opponents as children who believed that if you hid, the boogey man would go away. Not only did this action connote fear and dismay, but it characterized isolationists (and thus, the America First Committee), as ignorant and unwilling to face facts. Instead, Roosevelt called the citizenry to replace their fear with mature realism and rally around his Lend-Lease proposal. He asked them to identify with the realists, with those who accurately assessed world events and took steps to promote the overall safety and security of the nation. “Let not the defeatists tell us that it is too late. It will never be earlier. Tomorrow will be later than today.”³⁵⁸ The time for action was now.

After the president’s December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” Mrs. Dorothy M. Kuehn of Monrovia, California, wrote that if “England is willing to do the dying and suffering to save our civilization the least we can do is give her all possible aid. We cannot afford to let her fall.”³⁵⁹ Dr. C. F. DeGaris from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, thanked Roosevelt for identifying, “as any clear-sighted person must identify, England’s defense with our own.”³⁶⁰ Two days after Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chat,” Gallup conducted a poll and asked respondents if they had listened to the address. Seventy-six percent of those polled reported that they had either listened to it or read about it in the newspaper.

When asked if they agreed or disagreed with the “views [Roosevelt] expressed,” seventy-nine percent said they agreed.³⁶¹

In these pre-war “Fireside Chats,” Franklin D. Roosevelt shaped a scene in which the only way to avoid war with Germany was to send aid to Great Britain. He identified with his audience’s desire to remain at peace and presented the Lend-Lease Bill as designed to avoid war. When Roosevelt argued that sending military and economic aid to Great Britain would allow the British to keep fighting for “their liberty and our security,” he identified the objectives of the Lend-Lease plan with the shared values of his audience, namely, to keep their families and their nation safe and secure. This allowed Roosevelt’s audience to unify around his plan. He called forth a citizenry ready to show the “same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as [they] would show as if” the United States were at war because they realized that the future of their country and that of Great Britain were mutually dependent.³⁶²

CHAPTER FOUR

“ON MAINTAINING FREEDOM OF THE SEAS”: FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT’S SHIFT TO WAR RHETORIC

The American people have faced other grave crises in their history – with American courage, with American resolution. They will do no less today. They know the actualities of the attacks upon us. They know the necessities of a bold defense against these attacks. They know that the times call for clear heads and fearless hearts. And with that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty, conscious of the righteousness of what they do, they will – with Divine help and guidance – stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their sovereignty, and their freedom.³⁶³

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 11, 1941

The Roosevelt family estate, Springwood, sits atop a hill overlooking the Hudson River in upstate New York. It was here that Franklin D. Roosevelt was born, spent his boyhood, and lived with his mother Sara, his wife Eleanor, and his children until moving to the White House in 1933. During his presidency, Roosevelt would return to Hyde Park for long weekends and brought many foreign dignitaries to visit, including Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the King and Queen of England. Lining the entryway walls of this majestic house are prints, photographs, and paintings of U.S. ships that Roosevelt collected from 1910 until his death in 1945. The entire collection consists of over 6,000 images that illustrate the history of the U.S. Navy from the Revolutionary War through World War II.³⁶⁴ Samuel Rosenman wrote of how Roosevelt “developed great love of the sea” at an early age.

At Campobello [the Roosevelt summer home in New Brunswick, Canada], he became an expert sailor, managing with great skill the tides and turbulent currents of Passamaquoddy. There are few sports that train a man to rigid discipline better than handling a boat in difficult waters in

summer fogs. His love of the sea led him to learn as much as he could about it, and what it meant in the life of a nation. His favorite book at an early age was Mahan's *History of Sea Power*.³⁶⁵

It was Roosevelt's "love of the sea and his expertise with ships . . . [that] made Roosevelt so eager to accept the opportunity later in life of becoming Assistant Secretary of the Navy [under President Woodrow Wilson]."³⁶⁶

In 1917, when Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Wilson to authorize steps to prepare the U.S. Navy for war, Wilson denied the request. "I will tell you something I cannot tell the public," Wilson explained to Roosevelt. "I do not want . . . the United States to do anything . . . by way of war preparations, that would allow the definitive historian in later days to say that the United States had committed an unfriendly act against the central powers."³⁶⁷ Anxious to preserve a public stance of neutrality, Wilson hesitated when, in Roosevelt's estimation, he should have acted to equip the U.S. Navy for war. Twenty-four years later, Roosevelt faced a similar decision. During the "similar lonely travail through which Roosevelt was to pass in the summer and fall of 1941, seemingly trying to make up his mind about exactly what to do," Rosenman wrote, Roosevelt "remembered both these statements by Wilson."

One he followed; one he did not. He, too, would refuse to go "faster than the great mass of our people would permit." However, he was not worried by any latter-day historian's definitive assessment of hostile preparations. Where he felt he had the power, he would make them. Furthermore, his idea of "attack" by a submarine was quite different from Wilson's. Roosevelt, as President, maintained that the very presence of an enemy submarine in American waters was an attack even before it fired a torpedo.³⁶⁸

Ever conscious of public opinion, Roosevelt treaded carefully when he thought the citizenry was not ready to take the next step against Germany. However, when he believed he “had the power” from the U.S. public to take certain steps, he would.

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, President Franklin D. Roosevelt used his pre-war “Fireside Chats” to invoke a citizenry united around his plan for sending aid to Great Britain by persuading them that this military and economic assistance was the best way to keep the United States out of the European war. I have specifically addressed Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats” that discussed the European War and the United States’ proclamation of neutrality in the conflict (September 3, 1941), the country’s national defense and specific steps to increase military weapons and supplies (May 26, 1940), the introduction of Lend-Lease and how that legislation would defend the national security of the United States (December 29, 1941), and Roosevelt’s proclamation of unlimited national emergency in May 1941 (May 27, 1941). What has not been discussed is Roosevelt’s final pre-war “Fireside Chat” of September 11, 1941.

Where the previous four “Fireside Chats” proclaimed U.S. neutrality in the European war and detailed Roosevelt’s plans to increase U.S. military reserves and send aid to Great Britain, his “Fireside Chat” of September 11, 1941, justified U.S. military action against Nazi Germany. Steps to increase the United States’ safety and security, such as transferring U.S. destroyers to Britain in 1940, authorizing U.S. military and economic aid to Great Britain through the Lend-Lease bill, and stationing U.S. military personnel in Iceland and Great Britain had not involved direct U.S. military force against Germany. Instead, Roosevelt argued that by aiding Great Britain, the United States

would increase its own security and keep the nation out of war with Germany. However, in this “Fireside Chat” of September 11, 1941, the president assumed the powers of commander in chief and authorized the U.S. Navy and Army to fire upon any German or Italian ship, submarine, or airplane it encountered in the Atlantic Ocean. In doing so, Roosevelt adopted the stylistic elements of presidential war rhetoric in his final pre-war “Fireside Chat” to the U.S. public.

In their study of genres of presidential rhetoric, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson describe five components of war rhetoric.

[P]residential war rhetoric throughout U.S. history manifests five pivotal characteristics: (1) every element in it proclaims that the momentous decision to resort force is deliberate, the product of thoughtful consideration; (2) forceful intervention is justified through a chronicle or narrative from which argumentative claims are drawn; (3) the audience is exhorted to unanimity of purpose and total commitment; (4) the rhetoric not only justifies the use of force, but also seeks to legitimize presidential assumption of the extraordinary powers of commander in chief; and, as a function of these other characteristics, (5) strategic misrepresentations play an unusually significant role in its appeals.³⁶⁹

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat” contains each of these five elements. In this chapter, I draw on Campbell and Jameison’s framework for what constitutes presidential war rhetoric to examine how Roosevelt justified U.S. military action against Germany. In what follows, I first describe the historical context behind this address and attempt to explain why Roosevelt chose to misrepresent the facts surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* incident. I then conduct a rhetorical analysis of Roosevelt’s September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” specifically considering how Campbell and Jamieson’s five components of war rhetoric function in the president’s last “Fireside Chat” to the nation before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

The U.S.S. *Greer* Incident: Historical Context

In the first chapter of this project, I discussed the historical details surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* incident and how Roosevelt cleverly manipulated and strategically eliminated important facts in his September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat.”³⁷⁰ The archival materials related to this particular radio address demonstrate a clear preoccupation with such facts, particularly in the papers of Samuel Rosenman, one of Roosevelt’s advisors and chief speechwriters. The first item in Rosenman’s file on this “Fireside Chat” is an article from the *New York Times* of September 7, 1941. The headline reads, “Accuse President; Germans Say He Seeks War Provocation in War Blockade Zone; Give Details of Fight; and Assert Submarine Did Not Know the Identity of the Ship ‘Attacking’ and ‘Pursuing’ It.” Rosenman marked several key points of the article in pen, specifically a portion of the official German statement on the incident which read, “Roosevelt thereby is endeavoring with all the means at his disposal to provoke incidents for the purpose of baiting the American people into the war.”³⁷¹ In a separate *New York Times* article taped to the first, Rosenman marked a passage concerning the U.S. and British response to the situation:

American and English news service issued an item according to which, on the morning of September 4, in the course of an encounter between the American destroyer and a German U-boat, the destroyer was attacked by a U-boat. The torpedoes, it was said, missed their mark. The destroyer then pursued the U-boat, counter-attacking with depth charges.³⁷²

Rosenman’s obvious interest in the differing accounts of the U.S.S. *Greer* reflects the active public debate over the incident and what it meant for the future of U.S. foreign policy and involvement in the European war.

The *New York Times* first reported the story on September 5, 1941. “Submarine Attacks U.S. Destroyer Greer,” the front page headline read.³⁷³ News of the U.S.S. *Greer* incident received front page coverage in the *New York Times* for six successive days following announcement of the clash at sea.³⁷⁴ The White House announced that Roosevelt planned to make a speech of “major importance” on the incident on Monday, September 8, one of “world significance,” wrote the *New York Times*.³⁷⁵ However, the president’s beloved mother, Sara Delano Roosevelt, died unexpectedly on Sunday, September 7, requiring the radio address to be postponed until September 11, 1941. The public debate around the U.S.S. *Greer* and Roosevelt’s policy on maintaining safety in international waters continued to swirl as the nation awaited the president’s “Fireside Chat” on Thursday night. On September 10, the *New York Times* commented that “[t]he issue of the freedom of the seas and the relation of the United States and Germany to it have become a paramount question” facing the United States. It reported the sinkings of the U.S.S. *Steel Seafarer* and the *S. S. Sessa*. “These events,” the editorial continued, “coupled with the attack on the destroyer Greer, are expected to provide material of the greatest significance for the President’s speech tomorrow night.”³⁷⁶

It is clear that Roosevelt and his speechwriters considered the address of utmost importance as well. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, in a “stern and even aggressive mood” over the situation, “waxed so indignant about the situation that the President asked him to put it all in writing for [the] White House address.”³⁷⁷ The draft that Hull composed now sits in the speechwriting files of Samuel Rosenman. Three pages of terse and forceful prose, Hull’s handwritten note of “Most urgent” is scribbled in red pencil

along the top. The secretary of state consolidated the events surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* incident into three sentences. “The Navy reports that on the morning of September fourth the United States destroyer Greer was proceeding in full daylight toward Iceland. She was carrying American mail, and was flying an American flag. A German submarine attacked her by firing a number of torpedoes which missed their mark.”³⁷⁸ Although Rosenman and other speechwriters would provide more information surrounding the aftermath of the interaction between the U.S. destroyer and the German submarine for the final draft, Roosevelt’s September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat” began with Hull’s description almost word for word.³⁷⁹

One more insight can be gleaned from Rosenman’s files on this address. Although there are several Navy telegrams that report the attacks on the *S. S. Sessa* and the U.S.S. *Steel Seafarer*, there is no official naval documentation of the events surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* in the speechwriting files.³⁸⁰ What does exist, however, is Roosevelt’s obvious fury over those who charged that the United States was responsible for firing the first shot at the German submarine. Two draft inserts reflect this fury. The first was intended as an insert after Roosevelt described the sinkings of other U.S. ships.

To revert for a moment to the U.S.S. *Greer*, I am informed that an American organization, widely applauded and encouraged in the government controlled press of Germany and Italy which would have American citizens believe that Hitler’s Government does not wish to attack American ships or American shipping – and that, therefore, the Hitler Government assertion that the U.S.S. *Greer* fired first must be believed. It is more than a matter of interest – it is a matter which Americans should always remember – that the responsible leaders of this organization are deliberately telling their fellow citizens that the reports made by the officers of the U.S.S. *Greer* are false and of no account.

At the top of this page, next to this specific paragraph, “America first” is scrawled in Roosevelt’s own handwriting. Next to that remark, Rosenman’s more careful script explains, “Dictated by FDR but not used.”³⁸¹ The second insert deals specifically with German accusations that the United States Navy, and more specifically Roosevelt, had lied about the U.S.S. *Greer* incident.

I am not going to talk again this time about the inherent wickedness of the German leadership. I am not going to use invective against German leaders. I am not greatly worried or concerned when each day that passes I read the rather hysterical names which they give to me personally and to the United States as a whole in their daily press, and I assume that the German leaders are not deeply concerned by what we Americans say or publish about them. We cannot bring about the downfall of Nazism by the use of long-range invective.³⁸²

Although neither of these two inserts were used in the final version of the September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt clearly wanted to blame the America First Committee and the Germans for their accusations, accusations which in this case were true.³⁸³

Roosevelt’s decision to amplify and misrepresent the events surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer*’s encounter with the German submarine was a curious one, particularly because there were several other instances in which German submarines did in fact fire upon and sink U.S. ships. Roosevelt used three specific examples of such action in his “Fireside Chat”: the U.S. merchant ship *Robin Moor*, sunk in May 1941; the U.S.-owned ship operating under the Panamanian flag, the *S. S. Sessa*, torpedoed on August 17, 1941; and the U.S. navy ship *Steel Seafarer* sunk on September 6, 1941.³⁸⁴ However, in the September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt argued that the supposedly unprovoked German firing on the U.S.S. *Greer* indicated Hitler’s desire to “get control of the seas.”³⁸⁵ As a result, the president’s “Chat” called for two specific shifts in U.S. foreign policy.

The first was Roosevelt's announcement that U.S. ships would begin convoying military supplies to Great Britain. The second was what came to be known as the "shoot on sight" policy, whereby Roosevelt ordered the U.S. Army and Navy to shoot any Italian or German submarines they encountered.³⁸⁶

For just over two years, since his "Fireside Chat" of September 3, 1939, Roosevelt had warned the citizenry of the imminent threat Germany posed to the United States. Deeply conscious of the U.S. public's overwhelming desire for economic security and the pervasive isolationist sentiments throughout the country, Roosevelt had proceeded with caution. "My problem," the president wrote on December 14, 1939, "is to get the American people to think of conceivable consequences without scaring the American people into thinking that they are going to be dragged into this war."³⁸⁷ In August 1941, Roosevelt met British Prime Minister Winston Churchill for the first time as President of the United States. This meeting brought the president closer to committing the United States to just such a war, for at this meeting, Roosevelt promised British Prime Minister Winston Churchill that the United States would help transport convoys to Great Britain. According to historian Doris Kearns Goodwin, "[h]e had committed the United States to convoys at the Atlantic Conference, but he had not yet revealed the new policy to the American people. A submarine attack on the U.S.S. *Greer* gave him the incident he needed to mobilize public support for convoys."³⁸⁸ According to Churchill's report to his cabinet following this Atlantic summit, Roosevelt "said he would wage war, but not declare it, that he would become more and more provocative . . . Everything was to be done to force an 'incident.'"³⁸⁹ In fact, Churchill continued,

Roosevelt “made it clear that he would look for an ‘incident’ which would justify him in opening hostilities.”³⁸⁹ James MacGregor Burns describes the U.S.S. *Greer* encounter with the German submarine as the “incident” Roosevelt had been waiting for. “It was not much of an incident, since the *Greer* had sought out the submarine . . . [b]ut shots had been fired in anger, and Roosevelt felt that here was his chance to dramatize the Nazi menace that he had long been picturing.”³⁹⁰

Roosevelt was conscious of his ability to shift public opinion and saw in the U.S.S. *Greer* incident an opportunity to test the moods and attitudes of the citizenry. How would they respond to news that Germany had attacked a U.S. warship? What would they demand in return? Would they pressure the U.S. Congress to repeal the neutrality laws so that U.S. merchant ships could protect themselves? Would they support U.S. convoying of military supplies and weapons to Britain? Would they accept Roosevelt’s argument that maintaining “freedom of the seas” was essential to national defense? Roosevelt took a gamble in this September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” a gamble which he eventually won. Even though the America First Committee called for a congressional investigation into the events surrounding the *Greer* incident, investigations that revealed Roosevelt’s dishonesty in the matter, public opinion had already shifted to Roosevelt’s side.

At the same time, Roosevelt’s choice to misrepresent the facts in this “Fireside Chat” demonstrated his desire to “force an incident” with the Germans.³⁹¹ On September 5, 1941, Roosevelt sent Churchill a telegram that indicated how the events surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* related to future U.S. foreign policy towards the war.

At any rate I can now assure you that we can provide transports for 20,000 men . . . For your private and very confidential information I am planning to make a radio address Monday night relative to the attack on our destroyer and to make perfectly clear the action we intend to take in the Atlantic.³⁹²

Churchill wired back that “all were awaiting his speech with profound interest.”³⁹³ Given Roosevelt’s promise to become “more and more provocative” towards the Germans, this telegram demonstrates that Roosevelt viewed the U.S.S. *Greer* incident as a way to shift U.S. policy in the Atlantic. James MacGregor Burns argues that in Roosevelt’s September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” the president was

in effect declaring naval war on Germany, in response to the war of aggression he believed Germany was waging against his nation. The Atlantic cold war was over; now it was a hot war, limited only by America’s neutrality laws and by Hitler’s restraints on his submarine fleet. It was war nonetheless, and Roosevelt proceeded to act in those terms.³⁹⁴

Germany viewed Roosevelt’s speech as an act of war as well. Admiral Erich Raeder, the German naval chief, told Hitler, “There is no longer any difference between British and American ships.”³⁹⁵ The war in the Atlantic had begun.

“On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas” as War Rhetoric

Narrative Justification

According to Campbell and Jamieson, war rhetoric justifies “forceful intervention . . . through a chronicle or narrative from which argumentative claims are drawn.”³⁹⁶ Roosevelt structured this “Fireside Chat” as a narrative description of the events that had made this address necessary. He detailed the German torpedoing of the *S.S. Sessa*, an “American-owned ship operating under the flag of our sister Republic of Panama,” the

bombing and sinking of the U.S. merchant ship U.S.S. *Steel Seafarer*, and the torpedoing of another U.S. merchant ship, the U.S.S. *Robin Moor*. The president declared it “unworthy of a great nation to exaggerate an isolated incident, or to become inflamed by some one act of violence.” However, Roosevelt argued, this was not just one act, but a pattern of German aggression against the United States. “It would be inexcusable folly to minimize such incidents in the face of evidence which makes it clear that the incident is not isolated, but is part of a general plan.” Because Roosevelt believed the Nazis were advancing a war against the United States in the Atlantic, he declared that these sinkings were not isolated incidents. Instead, they were part of Hitler’s master plan. “The important truth is that these acts of international lawlessness are a manifestation of a design . . . It is the Nazi design to abolish the freedom of the seas, and to acquire absolute control and domination of these seas for themselves.”³⁹⁷

Roosevelt also connected his goal of keeping the Atlantic Ocean as “a free and friendly highway” as one that had justified U.S. military action throughout the nation’s history. “Generation after generation,” he said, “America has battled for the general policy of the freedom of the seas . . . That has been our policy, proved time and again, in all of our history.” He reminded his audience that “[t]his situation is not new. The second [p]resident of the United States, John Adams, ordered the United States Navy to clean out European privateers and European ships of war which were infesting the Caribbean and South American waters, destroying American commerce.” Thomas Jefferson, angered by the Barbary pirates from Algiers, Tunis, Morocco, and Tripoli who regularly attacked U.S. merchant ships, “ordered the United States Navy to end the

attacks being made upon American and other ships by the corsairs of the nations of North Africa.”³⁹⁸ Roosevelt used the military decisions of both Adams and Jefferson to justify his decision to maintain the “freedom of the seas” through U.S. military action against Germany. As president, Roosevelt had a “historic,” “clear,” and “inescapable” duty to defend the United States against Nazi acts of aggression.³⁹⁹

Deliberate, Thoughtful Action

Presidential war rhetoric also “proclaims that the momentous decision to resort to force is deliberate, the product of thoughtful consideration.”⁴⁰⁰ Roosevelt declared that in spite of German sinkings of U.S. ships in the Atlantic, neither he nor the U.S. public were “becoming hysterical or losing our sense of proportion.” Although he stated that “we Americans” were “keeping our feet on the ground” and not overacting to the situation, Roosevelt was concerned particularly with ensuring that the public did not view his action as one motivated by hysteria or panic. Instead, his response to the U.S.S. *Greer* incident and other sinkings was proportional, justified, and careful. Throughout his narrative description, Roosevelt continually emphasized that German attacks on U.S. ships demonstrated their desire to take control of the Atlantic. “It is now clear that Hitler has begun his campaign to control the seas by ruthless force and by wiping out every vestige of international, every vestige of humanity.”⁴⁰¹ Because “the attack on the *Greer*” was “one determined step towards creating a permanent world system based on force, on terror[,] and on murder,” Roosevelt declared that he had a clear duty and responsibility to respond to this threat as president of the United States.⁴⁰²

He reminded the U.S. public that the country had “sought no shooting war with Hitler. We do not seek it now.” The United States did not want to be at war with Germany, Roosevelt said. “But neither do we want peace so much, that we are willing to pay for it by permitting him to attack our naval and merchant ships while they are on legitimate business.”

[W]hen you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck before you crush him. These Nazi submarines and raiders are the rattlesnakes of the Atlantic. They are a menace to the free pathways of the high seas. They are a challenge to our own sovereignty. They hammer at our most precious rights when they attack ships of the American flag – symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very life.

Germany stood as a direct threat to the shared values of the U.S. public. By attacking “ships of the American flag,” Roosevelt said that the Nazis also attacked “symbols of our independence, our freedom, our very life.” Now, the president proclaimed, was “the time for prevention of attack.”⁴⁰³

He then explained the orders he had given to the U.S. Army and Navy. First, he defined what he considered an “attack” by Germany: “If [German] submarines or raiders attack in distant waters, they can attack equally well within sight of our own shores. Their very presence in any waters which America deems vital to its defense constitutes an attack.” Going forward, Roosevelt declared, U.S. naval vessels and airplanes would “no longer wait until Axis submarines lurking under the water, or Axis raiders on the surface of the sea, strike their deadly blow – first.” These ships and planes now had the duty to “protect all merchant ships – not only American ships but ships of any flag – engaged in commerce in our defense waters.” Going forward, any German or Italian vessels would

“enter the waters, the protection of which is necessary for American defense . . . at their own peril.”⁴⁰⁴

In this “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt explained to the U.S. public why he thought this action, the “shoot on sight” policy, was essential to the defense of the United States. First, because the safety and security of Great Britain depended on U.S. supplies and weaponry, the United States needed to ensure that these supplies and weapons would reach the British without being attacked or sunk by German submarines. Second, Roosevelt argued that the oceans surrounding the United States were vital to the defense of the nation. This new policy, Roosevelt said, was “the only step possible” to “keep tight the wall of defense which we are pledged to maintain around this Western Hemisphere.” As president, he had “no illusions about the gravity of this step. I have not taken it hurriedly or lightly. It is the result of months and months of constant thought and anxiety and prayer. In the protection of your nation and mine[,] it cannot be avoided.” Through his narrative description of events and his careful, logical explanation of why defending the Atlantic Ocean was essential to defending the United States, Roosevelt prepared the nation for war. He also justified his actions so that the U.S. public could rally around his plan, united by the common cause of protecting their country and shared values.

Citizens Invoked to National Purpose

A third characteristic of presidential war rhetoric is that it exhorts the audience “to unanimity of purpose and total commitment” to the cause the president describes.⁴⁰⁵ Roosevelt demonstrated his ability to invoke or call forth an audience united around his plan and devoted to the overall good of the United States in his four other pre-war

“Fireside Chats.”⁴⁰⁶ The president did this once again in his September 11, 1941, radio address. He called the citizenry to reject those who argued the United States should defend itself only “if the torpedo succeeds in getting home, or if the crew and the passengers are drowned.” Instead, Roosevelt confidently asserted that “we Americans are taking a long-range point of view in regard to certain fundamentals . . . a series of events on land and on sea which must be considered as a whole – as a part of a world pattern” of Nazi conquest and domination. At the end of his radio address, Roosevelt exhorted his audience to respond as a unified, supportive public.

The American people have faced other grave crises in their history – with American courage, with American resolution. They will do no less today. They know the actualities of the attacks upon us. They know the necessities of a bold defense against these attacks. They know that the times call for clear heads and fearless hearts.

The president reminded the citizenry of “other grave crises in their history” without directly stating the specific ones to which he was referring. The most recent crisis, the Great Depression, most certainly was on the minds of his audience. The “American people” had responded with courage, resolve, and determination. Roosevelt was confident that the U.S. public would respond to this new threat with “clear heads and fearless hearts.” Moreover, they would respond with

. . . that inner strength that comes to a free people conscious of their duty, conscious of the righteousness of what they will do, they will – with Divine help and guidance – stand their ground against this latest assault upon their democracy, their strength, and their freedom.⁴⁰⁷

Roosevelt called on his audience to be “conscious of their duty” and “stand their ground” in response to this “latest assault” by Germany on security of the United States. By stating that democracy, strength, and freedom belonged to “them,” the “American

people,” Roosevelt personalized the attack on the U.S.S. *Greer*. Instead of it being merely a Nazi submarine attacking a U.S. ship, Germany’s firing upon the U.S. naval vessel became a direct attack on the democracy, strength, and freedom of every individual listening to Roosevelt’s “Chat,” each and every member of the U.S. public. Just as Roosevelt had called his audience to sacrifice individually for the good of the nation as a whole in his December 29, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” the president now invoked a citizenry united around U.S. military action against Germany in the Atlantic Ocean.

Adoption of the Role of Commander in Chief

Presidential war rhetoric “not only justifies the use of force, but also seeks to legitimize presidential assumption of the extraordinary powers of commander in chief.”⁴⁰⁸ Although Roosevelt’s previous pre-war “Fireside Chats” dealt with issues of national defense and sending aid to Great Britain, Roosevelt never used the title of “commander in chief” to legitimize his actions. In this September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” however, Roosevelt stated that the “orders which I have given as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army and Navy are to carry out that policy [of shoot on sight] – at once.”⁴⁰⁹ Campbell and Jamieson express the force contained in this act of identifying oneself as commander in chief. “It is noteworthy that, like the inaugural address, war rhetoric is a rhetoric of investiture. In identifying a threat to the community and to its fundamental values, presidents implicitly argue that now is the appropriate time or them to assume the office of commander in chief.”⁴¹⁰ In this instance, although the United States was not at war with Germany, Roosevelt’s decision to speak and act as commander in chief added additional gravity to his words. He defended his order for

U.S. planes and ships to fire upon any German or Italian vessels they encountered as one made out of “obvious duty in this crisis.” Because the United States faced an overt threat in the Atlantic, Roosevelt argued that he needed to assume the powers of commander in chief to defend the nation and the citizenry.

It is also important to note that Roosevelt did not begin this chat by addressing the audience as “friends” as was his custom in the “Fireside Chats.” Instead, Roosevelt used the more commanding statement of: “My Fellow Americans.”⁴¹¹ Although this initial greeting unified the audience with Roosevelt, reminding them that they all were “Americans,” it did not contain the same spirit of familiarity and warmth as the other pre-war “Fireside Chats.” In this address, Roosevelt spoke as commander in chief, adopting a formal, decisive tone to communicate the rightness of his actions and justifying the use of U.S. military force.

Strategic Misrepresentations

A final component of war rhetoric is the president’s use of strategic misrepresentations to persuade the nation. Campbell and Jamieson write that “as a function of these other characteristics [of war rhetoric] . . . strategic misrepresentations play an unusually significant role” in the appeals of war rhetoric.⁴¹² As the first half of this chapter explains, Roosevelt’s argument for more decisive military action in the Atlantic, particularly the “shoot on sight” policy towards Germany submarines, relied directly on his misrepresentation of the U.S.S. *Greer* incident. By describing the incident as an unprovoked attack against a U.S. ship, Roosevelt supported his claim that the Germans wanted to “abolish freedom of the seas” in the Atlantic Ocean, waters that had

once been a “free and friendly highway” for trade and commerce. Because the Nazi submarine had attacked the U.S.S. *Greer* without cause, Roosevelt therefore had a responsibility to defend the United States against this act of aggression.⁴¹³

If Roosevelt had informed his audience that the U.S.S. *Greer* and a British military plane had followed the German submarine for several hours and the submarine fired on the U.S.S. *Greer* only after being shot at by the British plane, his case for military action would have been weakened substantially. The United States and Great Britain would be seen as provocateurs, willing and eager to start a conflict in the Atlantic. Based upon archival evidence and Churchill’s report to his cabinet following the Atlantic conference with Roosevelt, the term provocateur provides an accurate description of the president’s actions in September 1941. Roosevelt could have used other instances of German aggression against U.S. ships, such as the U.S.S. *Robin Moor* or the U.S.S. *Steel Seafarer*, to support his decision to take military action against the Nazis. These events were, in fact, unprovoked and clear acts of hostility against the United States. Instead, however, Roosevelt chose to capitalize on the U.S.S. *Greer* incident to justify his orders for any U.S. ship or airplane to attack any German or Italian “vessels of war.” To do so, Roosevelt argued, was “no act of war.” Instead, it was a decision “to protect the seas that are vital to American defense. The aggression is not ours. Ours is solely defense.”⁴¹⁴ In spite of Roosevelt’s strategic misrepresentation of the events, however, the majority of the U.S. public responded favorably to the president’s plan. It was, wrote Rosarah Campell of Los Angeles, California, “bold” but “absolutely necessary.”⁴¹⁵

Public Response

The day after Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat," the headline of the *New York Times* read, "Roosevelt Orders Navy to Shoot First if Axis Raiders Enter Our Defense Zones; Patrol to Protect British Ships Also."⁴¹⁶ "The difficulty of writing about the President's address," editorialized the *Boston Globe*, "is that no interpretation is required."⁴¹⁷ In their synopsis of Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat," the editors of the *New York Times* wrote that the president "spoke last night the words which we believe the country was waiting to hear. There will be no yielding to Hitler's threats. There will be no surrender of American rights on the high seas." The editors acknowledged, just as Roosevelt did in his speech, "[t]hat this course of action involves the risk of open war with Germany is obvious. It will be for Germany to choose." However, they wrote, the convictions of the U.S. public had shifted over the past year.

Under the surface of American life an immense change has taken place in the thinking of the American people. Risks that seemed too great to be accepted, even a year ago, now seem unimportant by comparison with the far greater risks of American inaction. If we had chosen now to stand aside from the task that awaits our doing, if we had backed away from the challenge of Nazi guns and yielded control of the high seas to a predatory Power which is the sworn enemy of our democratic system, we might have succeeded in avoiding some of the risks involved in further "incidents" at sea, but we would have accepted the far greater risk of helping Hitler cut the lines of communication between the United States and Great Britain, and by that manoeuvre [sic] win the war and dominate the world.

The "American people clearly understand" what a "Nazi victory would mean to us," the editorial continued. It was because they saw clearly the Nazi threat "that a great majority of the American people have given their support for a whole series of measures taken during the last year for the single purpose of defeating Hitler," measures including

transferring U.S. destroyers to Great Britain, the Lend-Lease bill, the U.S. military presence in Greenland and Iceland, and large military appropriations for national defense. Although these measures “involved risks,” were “deliberately partisan and unneutral,” and “gave Hitler more than enough excuse to declare war upon the United States,” each one was supported by the U.S. public. “Having come this far, and for these reasons, the American people realize that there can be no turning back,” the editors wrote. Roosevelt had “nailed the flag of the United States” to the cause of defending the Atlantic ocean from German incursion. “We are certain,” the article concluded by quoting Roosevelt’s words from the September 11, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” that “the American people will rally to his support, in defense of ‘their democracy, their sovereignty, and their freedom.’”⁴¹⁸

The U.S. public did rally to support the president’s plan. A Gallup Poll conducted on September 17, just six days after Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chat,” demonstrated this. When asked if they supported the president’s “shoot on sight” policy, sixty-one percent of respondents said they approved. Another question inquired whether it was more important for the United States to keep out of the war or to help Great Britain, even if that meant the United States would enter the war against Germany. Thirty percent of respondents said it was more important to “keep out of the war ourselves.” Sixty-three percent supported helping Britain, “even at the risk of getting into the war,” while sixty-seven percent said it was more important that Germany be defeated than for the United States to stay out of the conflict. However, when asked if the United States should enter the war against Germany, only nineteen percent said yes. Seventy-three percent

responded no.⁴¹⁹ Although the majority of the U.S. public indicated support for Roosevelt's defense of the Atlantic Ocean, they most certainly did not want the United States to declare war on Germany. James MacGregor Burns comments that these poll numbers demonstrate that "many Americans were still accepting at face value Roosevelt's promise that his defense measures would keep America *out* of war."⁴²⁰

James Meyberg from Los Angeles, California, wrote to Roosevelt after his "Fireside Chat." "I love my country and hope and pray that we may remain at peace. I am grateful," he continued, "that you, the Commander-in-Chief of our armed forces, desiring peace but valuing the safety of our country, have shown the courage to protect America from aggression. You, our president, have kept faith with those who placed their trust in you," he concluded.⁴²¹ Not everyone was as supportive of the president, however. Mrs. Rose G. Rockwell of New York, New York said, "I protest vigorously, the stand taken in the Radio Speech of Thursday night. I consider the speech an unwarranted[,] dangerous, veiled provocation, inciting to war."⁴²² Both letters express the overall desire of the U.S. public to keep out of the European war. However, as the poll numbers also reflect, the majority of the citizenry also believed that the United States should act to protect the country from German submarines sinking U.S. ships in the Atlantic.

Conclusion

Where Roosevelt's four other pre-war "Fireside Chats" called the nation to support measures to strengthen U.S. defense and send aid to Great Britain, this last pre-war "Fireside Chat" advocated military action against Germany. In doing so, it

functioned as a piece of war rhetoric. Believing that the German attacks on U.S. ships were a direct threat to the security of the United States, Roosevelt assumed the role of commander in chief and prepared the country for war. Although the United States officially would not enter the war until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, this “Fireside Chat” shifted the tone of Roosevelt’s rhetoric. For the first time in his presidency, Roosevelt justified his actions as the commander in chief of the U.S. Army and Navy. He provided a narrative of the German submarine attacks on the U.S.S. *Greer*, the U.S.S. *Robin Moor*, the *S.S. Sessa*, and the U.S.S. *Steel Seafarer* as acts intended “to acquire absolute control and domination” of the Atlantic Ocean.⁴²³ The president explained the careful and deliberate thought that went into his decision to implement his “shoot on sight” policy, arguing that the United States did not seek a “shooting war with Hitler.”⁴²⁴ However, Roosevelt said, he had a duty as president of the United States of America to defend the nation against hostile acts in the Atlantic Ocean. By strategically misrepresenting the events surrounding the U.S.S. *Greer* incident, Roosevelt thus supported his actions as commander in chief and prepared the citizenry for war with Germany.⁴²⁵

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

We do not accept, we will not permit, this Nazi “shape of things to come.” It will never be forced upon us, if we act in this present crisis with the wisdom and the courage which have distinguished our country in all the crises of the past.⁴²⁶

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, May 27, 1941

The day after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat” proclaiming a state of unlimited national emergency, Anthony J. Kerin of New Rochelle, New York, wrote to the president.

Yesterday I felt that we should stay out of the war and I telegraphed that regardless of the interventionists you would keep us out of the European conflict. After hearing your inspiring and realistic speech of tonight[,] I have changed my mind. I am now satisfied that I[,] a former soldier of the World War[,] was too definitely influenced regarding my sons getting into the next war. Your forthright speech has changed my ideas[,] and now I think that you[,] our President[,] know what is best for our national welfare and I am therefore prepared to accept your leadership in whatever course you lay out for us . . .⁴²⁷

In this short but poignant letter, Mr. Kerin expressed his faith in the president’s leadership, belief that Roosevelt would do what was “best for our national welfare.” He also indicated how the president’s address had produced a change in his views on the war in Europe. As a soldier who fought in World War I, Mr. Kerin acknowledged his aversion to engaging in another global conflict. However, Roosevelt’s “inspiring,” “realistic,” and “forthright speech [had] changed [his] ideas,” and he was “prepared to accept [Roosevelt’s] leadership in whatever course” the president set forth. Through this and his four other pre-war “Fireside Chats” to the nation, Roosevelt demonstrated his

ability as president to connect with the individual citizens listening to his address, his skill as a master rhetorician in persuading his audience to accept his foreign policy initiatives, and his underlying knowledge of the two main fears facing the nation: economic depression and involvement in another international conflict.

The aim of this project was to demonstrate how Franklin D. Roosevelt used his five pre-war “Fireside Chats” to persuade the U.S. public that sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to avoid U.S. involvement in the European war. The central research question of this study asked how Roosevelt used these “Fireside Chats” to appeal to his audience and convince them that sending military and economic aid to Great Britain was the surest way to keep out of war with Germany. To answer these questions, this study argued that Roosevelt’s rhetorical approach was designed to appeal to the U.S. public’s desires for two specific things: economic growth and stability at home, and freedom from international entanglements abroad.

In chapter one, I provided the historical context for these five “Fireside Chats” as a rhetorical text. I also examined how Roosevelt established a relationship with his audience, the U.S. public, through the thirteen previous “Fireside Chats” he delivered between March 1933 and September 1939. Using the new medium of radio to communicate with the citizenry, Roosevelt set a precedent for talking *with* the people, addressing them as “my friends,” instead of speaking *to* them as a distant chief executive. This chapter also surveyed current historical and rhetorical scholarship on Roosevelt and the “Fireside Chats,” arguing that this study bridges a gap in the relevant literature by examining how Roosevelt used his five pre-war “Fireside Chats” from 1939 to 1941 to

move a majority of his audience from total isolationism to support for sending U.S. aid to Great Britain.

The second chapter specifically addressed my claim that Roosevelt recognized the U.S. public's desire to maintain the economic stability of the United States by avoiding war. To a nation recovering from the worst economic crisis of its history, the idea of sending monetary aid and military supplies to Great Britain seemed foolish and irresponsible. Instead, Roosevelt argued that helping Britain in its struggle against Nazi Germany would protect the U.S. economy. To do this, Roosevelt invoked a citizenry united around his plan by recalling their shared efforts against the Great Depression, celebrating their shared moral values, appealing to the "patriotism of labor" to end strikes, and equating a German victory over Great Britain with the economic strangulation of the United States.

Chapter three examined how Roosevelt addressed his audience's fear of becoming involved in another international conflict by presenting Lend-Lease as a plan to keep the United States out of war. World War I had jaded the citizenry from overseas involvement, produced a national climate of isolationism, and led to the America First Committee's (AFC) formation in September 1940. Although the AFC attempted to co-opt Lend-Lease by portraying it as a bill designed to involve the United States in war, they were unsuccessful. Instead, Roosevelt assured the citizenry that he shared their aversion to entering the war and argued that Lend-Lease was designed to maintain national security and promote peace.

In chapter four, I discussed Roosevelt's final pre-war "Fireside Chat" as an example of war rhetoric. In this address, Roosevelt detailed a "shoot on sight" policy in which he ordered the U.S. Army and Navy to fire on any German or Italian ship, submarine, or plane it encountered in the Atlantic Ocean. Roosevelt justified his decision by providing a narrative of the incident and detailing the U.S. policy of maintaining "freedom of the seas," emphasizing that the decision was a result of careful thought, calling on his audience to support his proposal, assuming the powers of commander in chief, and misrepresenting the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident in an effort to arouse the U.S. public to conclude that these controversial decisions were necessary.⁴²⁸

In other words, I argue that Franklin D. Roosevelt's five pre-war "Fireside Chats" must be analyzed in order to understand the political, historical, economic, and social culture of the United States from 1939 to 1941. As the previous chapters of this project discussed, Roosevelt considered these radio addresses "a way to sit down with the American public and discuss with them the issues which pertained to their own well-being."⁴²⁹ They demonstrate Roosevelt's ability to connect with the U.S. public on such issues, speaking to them directly and candidly about the problems confronting the nation and their individual lives. Specifically, the five radio addresses Roosevelt gave between the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 represent how Roosevelt appealed to the U.S. public to support his policy of sending aid to Great Britain. These addresses are important beyond Roosevelt's foreign policy initiatives or political concerns.

Because Roosevelt skillfully addressed the desires and fears of his audience in his radio addresses, these five “Fireside Chats” also reveal how the U.S. public responded to the growing German threat in Europe. Roosevelt understood that the First World War and the Great Depression had shaped the public opinion of a generation, and he tailored his argument for aiding Britain as one that would prevent a repeat of these crises. Ultimately, these “Chats” reveal Roosevelt’s skill as a master rhetorician, a president able to connect with individual citizens in a personal way. In the concluding pages, I briefly discuss how these five pre-war “Fireside Chats” provide insight into Roosevelt as President, Roosevelt as rhetorician, and Roosevelt as a keen observer of the fears and desires of the U.S. public. I also comment on areas for future research.

Roosevelt as President

As noted, Roosevelt’s direct and personal communication with the U.S. public was a clear departure from the style of his predecessor, Herbert Hoover. Where Hoover spoke in language that appeared aloof and unconcerned with the individual problems facing the citizenry, Roosevelt spoke as if he was talking to individual members of his audience face-to-face. “My friends,” he greeted his audience at the beginning of his May 26, 1940, “Fireside Chat,” “let us sit down, together again, to consider our own pressing problems that confront us.”⁴³⁰ The war in Europe affected the nation as a whole, but Roosevelt acknowledged the conflict also had personal implications. Just as the Great Depression had impacted everyday men, women, and children, so too would the war in Europe affect members of the U.S. public. Roosevelt warned the citizenry of the threat Germany posed to the United States and yet pledging to do all in his power to prevent a “blackout of peace in

the United States.”⁴³¹ Mrs. J. A. Ringis of Detroit, Michigan, wrote to Roosevelt after his September 3, 1939, “Fireside Chat.” She thanked him “for the very friendly and sincere speech. It made me wish that I might pick up my telephone and talk to you. You DO seem like a friend to each of us and oh I do hope that you will keep us out of War!”⁴³²

Roosevelt also demonstrated his ability to influence public opinion through his five pre-war “Fireside Chats.” The second and third chapters of this project detailed the citizenry’s aversion to any policy that would undermine the economic stability of the nation or lead to U.S involvement in another war in Europe. However, Roosevelt slowly convinced the U.S. public that sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to keep the United States out of war through his radio addresses. In September 1939, just after Germany invaded Poland and Great Britain declared war on Germany, ninety-two percent of Gallup Poll respondents disapproved of U.S. entry into the war. When asked if the United States should sell military supplies to Great Britain and France, fifty-six percent said yes and forty percent said no.⁴³³ Two years and five “Fireside Chats” later, sixty-three percent of poll respondents said that it was more important for the United States to send aid to Great Britain, even if doing so resulted in the nation getting into war.⁴³⁴

This shift was accomplished primarily through Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats.” Letters written to Roosevelt in response reveal that the citizenry understood that Roosevelt was advocating a shift of mindset in his radio addresses. “You have spoken to me in your fireside chats about matters which are too important to leave settled by a one way of conversation,” wrote Nelson Handsalter of Saint Paul, Minnesota, after Roosevelt’s May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat.” “[H]ence I am now addressing you in the only way I have of

replying.”⁴³⁵ Ann Patton Brown recorded her response to the “Fireside Chat” of December 29, 1940: “I am a young woman intelligent and well bred, I listened to your last broad cast in which you called upon us to help with the defense program and I am most willing.”⁴³⁶ One remarkable letter offering individual sacrifice for the nation came from Charles Fisher of Chicago, Illinois. “Dear sir, I am colored & have listened to your message today. Altho [sic] I am colored & am out of the conscription age at present you will find me ready to serve anytime men of my age are needed, either in peace or in war.”⁴³⁷ Despite the grave injustices facing African American members of the U.S. military at this period, Mr. Fisher volunteered his services to his country.⁴³⁸ These and many other letters demonstrated that the U.S. public responded to Roosevelt’s explanation of the international situation and approved the steps he proposed that the country needed to take.

In these “Fireside Chats,” Roosevelt also spoke directly and honestly about the situation in Europe. He had proceeded similarly in his radio addresses during the Great Depression, developing a relationship with the U.S. public characterized by mutual trust. Future U.S. Presidents recognized the benefits of such a relationship. John F. Kennedy, concerned that he was not speaking directly to “the people,” had Arthur Schlesinger research the frequency of Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats” and was relieved to learn that the former president gave “far fewer fireside chats than people remembered, an average of only 2.5 a year.”⁴³⁹ Jimmy Carter instituted his own brand of the “Fireside Chat” only a month into his presidency. He delivered a nationally-televised address “beside a real fire – a crackling, three log blaze in the White House Library” while wearing a cardigan sweater.⁴⁴⁰ The aura surrounding these legendary “Chats” continues to the present day; Barack Obama

frequently quoted Roosevelt's first "Fireside Chat" during the 2008 presidential campaign.⁴⁴¹ These attempts to emulate Roosevelt's method of communication with the U.S. public demonstrate just how successful the president was at identifying with and thus influencing the citizenry in his "Fireside Chats."

Roosevelt as Rhetorician

These five pre-war "Fireside Chats" also demonstrate Roosevelt's skill as a master rhetorician and his ability to invoke a citizenry motivated by patriotism and to unify them around his plan for sending aid to Great Britain. Roosevelt addressed his audience by describing their individual circumstances and their personal concerns. He spoke of the "workmen in the mills, the mines, the factories; the girl behind the counter; the small shopkeeper; the farmer doing his spring plowing; the widows and old men wondering about their life's savings." Roosevelt reminded his audience that he was aware that his decisions as president impacted their individual circumstances. Just as he had done in the Great Depression, Roosevelt used the "Fireside Chats" to explain what his policies towards Great Britain and the European war meant to "the great mass of the American people . . . in their daily lives."⁴⁴²

Roosevelt also called forth a specific type of audience. He made the "simple plea that partisanship and selfishness be adjourned; and that national unity be the thought that underlies all others."⁴⁴³ He asked his audience to put away "fears and illusions," and "in our homes in the midst of our American families," join together as a national family and "consider what we have done and what we must do."⁴⁴⁴ He called on his audience to respond to the international crisis with the same "courage and realism" they had shown in

the face of the Great Depression.⁴⁴⁵ He expected that the U.S. public would demonstrate “the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war.”⁴⁴⁶ He called on the citizenry to support civilian defense by using “American common sense in discarding rumor and distorted statement.”⁴⁴⁷ In his final pre-war “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt flatly stated that it was “time for all Americans, Americans of all the Americas[,] to stop being deluded by the romantic notion that the Americas can go on living happily and peacefully in a Nazi-dominated world.”⁴⁴⁸ By describing the reactions of patriotic citizens dedicated to the good of their country, Roosevelt called into being a nation ready to support his policy of sending aid to Great Britain. He unified a patriotic citizenry around a common goal: keeping the United States out of war with Germany.

Roosevelt portrayed his policies as a way to preserve the ideals of the nation for future generations. “[W]e build and defend not for our generation alone. We defend the foundations laid down by our fathers. We build a life for generations yet unborn. We defend and we build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind. Ours is a high duty, a noble task.”⁴⁴⁹ Declaring a state of national emergency in his May 27, 1941, “Fireside Chat,” Roosevelt stated that he expected “all individuals and all groups to play their full parts, without stint, and without selfishness, and without doubt that our democracy will triumphantly survive.” He quoted the words of the nation’s founding document to support his call to action: “I repeat the words of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence—that little band of patriots, fighting long ago against overwhelming odds, but certain, as we are now, of ultimate victory: ‘With a firm reliance

on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”⁴⁵⁰ By identifying the nation’s current struggle against Germany with the United States’ struggle for independence one hundred and sixty-five years earlier, Roosevelt called on his audience to act as a nation unified by their past and committed to a shared future.

Roosevelt and the U.S. Public

These five pre-war “Fireside Chats” also reveal Roosevelt’s ability to identify and address the fears and concerns driving the U.S. public during this period in U.S. history. Two were primary: the fear of another economic crisis and an utter distaste for U.S. involvement in another European war. At the outset of the war in Europe, the president stated that he could not “prophesy the immediate economic effect of this new war on our nation” but declared that “no American has the moral right to profiteer at the expense either of his fellow citizens or of the men, the women and the children who are living and dying in the midst of war in Europe.”⁴⁵¹ In subsequent “Fireside Chats,” Roosevelt addressed issues that directly affected the economic health of the nation, including the role businessmen and labor unions would play in manufacturing materials for national defense and the government’s pledge to protect U.S. consumers from the threat of inflation.⁴⁵²

Roosevelt repeatedly reminded the citizenry of his desire to keep the nation at peace. To a nation scarred by U.S. involvement in the Great War, Roosevelt set forth his plan for sending aid to Great Britain as the best way to keep out of war in Europe and to ensure Hitler’s defeat. He acknowledged his audience’s desire to avoid “permanent

alliances” with nations as George Washington had warned against in his farewell address.

However, he argued that the country’s national safety was

bound up with the safety of the Western Hemisphere and of the seas adjacent thereto. We seek to keep war from our own firesides by keeping war from coming to the Americas. For that we have historic precedent that goes back to the days of the Administration of President George Washington. It is serious enough and tragic enough to every American family in every state in the Union to live in a world that is torn by wars on other Continents. And those wars today affect every American home. It is our national duty to use every effort to keep those wars out of the Americas.⁴⁵³

For Roosevelt, this duty involved sending aid to Great Britain, an action designed to

“keep war from our own firesides.”

Areas for Future Study

Any project of this size must narrow its scope. I chose to limit this study to considering how Roosevelt argued that sending aid to Great Britain was the best way to keep the United States out of war with Germany in the five “Fireside Chats” he delivered between September 1939 and December 1941. Several areas deserve future study and analysis. Although chapter three discussed President Woodrow Wilson’s rhetoric leading up to U.S. involvement in the Great War, there is room to discuss how Wilson’s foreign policy impacted his Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and thus affected Roosevelt’s choices as commander in chief twenty years later.

Another area for future analysis is how Roosevelt’s campaign rhetoric during the 1940 presidential election affected U.S. public opinion and prepared the citizenry to accept Roosevelt’s Lend-Lease policy. Running for an unprecedented third term in 1940, Roosevelt pledged during his campaign that he would keep the United States out of war

with Germany and waited to announce his Lend-Lease plan until after his reelection in November. His opponent, Wendell Willkie, openly supported sending U.S. aid to Great Britain. After the election in 1940, members of the America First Committee charged that Roosevelt had lied during the campaign about his desire to keep the United States out of war.

If these five pre-war “Fireside Chats” are taken as a rhetorical text to discuss the historical and political climate of the United States between 1939 and 1941, the absence of any mention of the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Japan is noteworthy. Roosevelt’s silence on Japan demonstrates how he and the members of his administration viewed the critical areas of the war. Europe was central; Asia was secondary. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s cousin, President Theodore Roosevelt, had warned that a deterioration of U.S. diplomatic relations with Japan could lead to an attack on Hawaii, specifically Pearl Harbor.⁴⁵⁴ The U.S. public also knew that the relationship between the United States and Japan was not strong. In September 1940, forty-nine percent of the U.S. public believed that “Japan’s power in the Far East” posed a serious threat to the United States.⁴⁵⁵ Five months later, in February 1941, fifty-six percent said that the United States should “try to keep Japan from seizing the Dutch East Indies and Singapore.”⁴⁵⁶ On November 25, 1941, just two weeks before Pearl Harbor, seventy-three percent of the U.S. public responded “yes” to the question of if the United States “should take steps now to keep Japan from becoming more powerful, even if this means risking a war with Japan.”⁴⁵⁷ Although Roosevelt was aware of the threat Japan posed to the United States, he chose not to discuss it with the U.S. public until after the Japanese

attack on Pearl Harbor. This silence, therefore, should be approached as a foray into Roosevelt's foreign policy towards Asia and the United States' diplomatic relations with Japan during this period.⁴⁵⁸

Conclusion

Reflecting on the "days of Mr. Roosevelt," Pulitzer-prize winning novelist Saul Bellow wrote about the unifying power of Roosevelt's radio addresses.

I can recall walking eastward on the Chicago Midway on a summer evening. The light held after nine o'clock, and the ground was covered with clover, more than a mile of green between Cottage Grove and Stony Island. The blight hadn't yet carried off the elms, and under them drivers had pulled over, parking bumper to bumper, and turned on their radios to hear Roosevelt. They had rolled down the windows and opened their car doors. Everywhere the same voice, its odd Eastern accent, which in anyone else would have irritated Midwesterners. You could follow without missing a single word as you strolled by. You felt joined to these unknown drivers, men and women smoking their cigarettes in silence, not so much considering the President's words as affirming the rightness of his tone and taking assurance from it. You had in some sense the weight of the troubles that made them so attentive, and of the ponderable fact, the one common element (Roosevelt), on which so many unknowns could agree.⁴⁵⁹

Bellow recalled how total strangers were joined together by Roosevelt's voice, mutually agreeing with the "rightness" of his "tone and taking assurance from it." The president was a unifying national figure, the "one common element . . . on which so many unknowns could agree," and his "Fireside Chats" linked total strangers in a common cause. In the five pre-war "Fireside Chats," this common cause was keeping the United States out of the European war.

Although the country eventually entered World War II in December 1941, these radio addresses had prepared the nation for war. Roosevelt had rallied the citizenry

around a common cause: defending the United States against other nations that threatened the national values of personal freedom and democracy. He had reminded the nation that together, they had conquered the economic crisis of the Great Depression with courage, determination, and mutual resolve. Together, they would meet this new crisis with similar “courage and realism.”⁴⁶⁰ He had inspired individual citizens to sacrifice for their country. “After hearing your speech,” wrote one listener, “I resolved to live for my country, and live the best I can, [and] you know that’s a harder job than to die for it in war.”⁴⁶¹ Thus, when Roosevelt asked for a declaration of war on Japan following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the citizenry rallied around their president once again, confident in his ability to lead the nation and united by their “absolute confidence that [their] common cause [would] greatly succeed.”⁴⁶²

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Archival Collections

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Master Speech File

President's Personal File

President's Personal File 1820 – Speech Materials and Suggestions

President's Secretary's File

Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman

Papers of Stephen Early

This edited volume of letters sent to President Franklin D. Roosevelt following his “Fireside Chats” also provided enormously helpful primary sources:

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The Gallup Poll #170. September 19, 1939.

The Gallup Poll #196. May 23, 1940.

The Gallup Poll #197. May 29, 1940.

The Gallup Poll #213. September 30, 1940.

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NOTES

Chapter One

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⁴ There is some discussion over the exact number of "Fireside Chats" given by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Although official governmental records indicate twenty-seven, others have argued for as many as thirty-one, including the addition of the May 27, 1941, address considered in this thesis. I have included this address in my analysis for several reasons. First, scholars familiar with the "Chats" generally agree that this address carries all the marks of a "Fireside Chat" and should be included in the collection (see Russell D. Buhite and David W. Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992, xv; Halford Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 29). Moreover, the spacing of this address falls within the general timeline between other "Fireside Chats"; Roosevelt delivered the one preceding it on December 29, 1940, and the one following it on September 11, 1941, just two months before Pearl Harbor. Finally, this address helps to explain a shift in U.S. public opinion towards U.S. involvement in the war and thus aids the overall purpose of this project. For a more detailed discussion on the number of Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats," see Buhite & Levy, xv, and Elvin T. Lim, "The Lion and the Lamb: De-Mythologizing Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Chats," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 441.

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⁷ Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 2; Buhite and Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats*, 147.

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⁹ See Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) and Robert J. Brown, *Manipulating the Ether: The Power of Broadcast Radio in Thirties America* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1998) for a helpful discussion of the rise of radio in the 1920s and 1930s.

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¹⁵ Hadley Cantril, *The Psychology of Radio* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935), 18.

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¹⁷ Cantril, *The Psychology of Radio*, 20.

¹⁸ Amos Kiewe, *FDR's First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 20.

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²⁰ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 19.

²¹ Halford B. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 19, 21.

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²³ Roosevelt, "On the Bank Crisis."

- ²⁴ These letters are only a sampling of many sent to Roosevelt following his first “Fireside Chat.” For a more complete discussion of public response to this address and all other “Fireside Chats,” see Lawrence L. Levine and Cornelia R. Levine, *The People and the President: America’s Conversation with FDR* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002).
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- ³⁰ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 42-43.
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- ⁴¹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 434.
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- ⁴³ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 435.
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- ⁴⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On National Defense,” May 26, 1940. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052640.html>; Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 192-198.
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- ⁵⁸ Gilbert, *The Second World War*, 117.
- ⁵⁹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 460.
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- ⁷⁰ The Gallup Poll #227, December 31, 1940. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0227>. Comparison between Gallup Poll #227 and Gallup Poll #197 referenced in footnote 50.
- ⁷¹ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 100.
- ⁷² Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency," May 27, 1941. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052741.html>.
- ⁷³ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."
- ⁷⁴ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 100.
- ⁷⁵ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency"; Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 101; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 491-92.
- ⁷⁶ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."
- ⁷⁷ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 282-83.
- ⁷⁸ The Gallup Poll #238, May 29, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0238>.
- ⁷⁹ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 102.
- ⁸⁰ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 496; Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 290.
- ⁸¹ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 344.
- ⁸² Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 374.
- ⁸³ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 374-75.
- ⁸⁴ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 103; Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 375; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 497-98.
- ⁸⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas," September 11, 1941. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/091141.html>.
- ⁸⁶ Gilbert, *The Second World War*, 230.
- ⁸⁷ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 289.
- ⁸⁸ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*, 107.
- ⁸⁹ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 288.
- ⁹⁰ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 294.
- ⁹¹ The Gallup Poll #248, September 17, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0248&p=1>.

- ⁹² The Gallup Poll #255, December 10, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0255>.
- ⁹³ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 305.
- ⁹⁴ Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (April 1970): 113.
- ⁹⁵ Walter J. Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always Fiction," *PLMA* 90, no. 1 (January 1975):12.
- ⁹⁶ Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Roles of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," *College Composition and Communication* 35, no. 2 (May 1984): 156, 160.
- ⁹⁷ Ede and Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," 168.
- ⁹⁸ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 46.
- ⁹⁹ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 88.
- ¹⁰⁰ Roosevelt, "On the European War."
- ¹⁰¹ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). For a full discussion of presidential war rhetoric, see pages 217-253.
- ¹⁰² Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.
- ¹⁰³ Amos Kiewe, *FDR's First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 127, 128.
- ¹⁰⁴ Keiko Aoki, "A Study of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Persuasive Communication within the Fireside Chat: An Analysis of Language and Style," *Human Communication*, 9, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 72, 73.
- ¹⁰⁵ David Michael Ryfe, "Franklin Roosevelt and the Fireside Chats," *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 80, 89.
- ¹⁰⁶ Elvin T. Lim, "The Lion and the Lamb: De-Mythologizing Franklin Roosevelt's Fireside Chats," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 438, 445.
- ¹⁰⁷ Lim, "The Lion and the Lamb," 449.
- ¹⁰⁸ Buhite and Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats*, xviii.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency*, 19.
- ¹¹⁰ Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency*, 28, 29.
- ¹¹¹ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 15.
- ¹¹² Casey, *Cautious Crusade*, 34, 35.
- ¹¹³ Mark A. Stoler, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Public Opinion," in *Selling War in a Media Age: The Presidency and Public Opinion in the American Century*, eds. Kenneth Osgood and Andrew Frank (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2010), 69.
- ¹¹⁴ Brown, *Manipulating the Ether*; Craig, *Fireside Politics*.
- ¹¹⁵ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."
- ¹¹⁶ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

Chapter Two

- ¹¹⁷ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On National Security," December 29, 1940. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/122940.html>.
- ¹¹⁸ Lawrence W. Levine and Cornelia R. Levine, *The People and the President: America's Conversation with FDR* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 370-71.
- ¹¹⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On National Defense," May 26, 1940. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052640.html>.
- ¹²⁰ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."
- ¹²¹ Russell D. Buhite and David W Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 5; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt: The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), 3.
- ¹²² Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt*, 3.

- ¹²³ Adam Cohen, *Nothing to Fear* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 3.
- ¹²⁴ Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt*, 3.
- ¹²⁵ Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt*, 3.
- ¹²⁶ Cohen, *Nothing to Fear*, 1-2.
- ¹²⁷ Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: The New York Years, 1928-1933* (New York: Random House, 1979), 154.
- ¹²⁸ Buhite and Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats*, 11.
- ¹²⁹ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 10.
- ¹³⁰ Davis, *FDR: The New York Years*, 148.
- ¹³¹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 10.
- ¹³² David Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 249.
- ¹³³ Davis, *FDR: The New York Years*, 151.
- ¹³⁴ Burner, *Herbert Hoover*, 249.
- ¹³⁵ Harry L. Hopkins, "The Realities of Unemployment," (Washington, D.C.: Works Progress Administration, 1937), 2. Retrieved from <http://fraser.stlouisfed.org/publications/roune/>.
- ¹³⁶ Herbert Hoover, "Address to the Chamber of Commerce of the United States," May 1, 1930. Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22185#ixzz1Ye847v7g>.
- ¹³⁷ Herbert Hoover, "Address," October 2, 1930. Retrieved from <http://hhpapers.org/paper19301002.html>.
- ¹³⁸ Buhite and Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats*, 5.
- ¹³⁹ Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt*, 438.
- ¹⁴⁰ Burner, *Herbert Hoover*, 317.
- ¹⁴¹ "Election Results: President-Reject," *TIME*, November 14, 1932. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,847063,00.html>.
- ¹⁴² Franklin D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1933. Retrieved from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrfirstinaugural.html>. Here Roosevelt cast the Great Depression in military terms, asking his audience to unite with him against the crisis as "if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe." He would later relate the escalating war in Europe to this domestic economic crisis, describing both events as threats "to the security of our nation" in his December 29, 1940 "Fireside Chat." Historian Michael Sherry discusses Roosevelt's choice to characterize the Great Depression in military terms, noting that this "war analogy reflected the felt gravity of the economic crisis and FDR's sense of what would best mobilize Americans behind his course of action" (Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 15-16). He argues that Roosevelt's choice to equate the Great Depression with invasion of the United States ushered in a new war-time consciousness to the nation, a framework for describing and addressing issues facing the United States, both foreign and domestic, to the present day. As such, "Americans have lived under the shadow of war" since the late 1930s (Sherry, ix). Andrew Bacevich makes a similar point in his work, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War*, arguing that "America's marriage of a militaristic cast of mind with utopian ends" has "established itself as the distinguishing element of contemporary U.S. policy" (Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3). Although Bacevich does not address Roosevelt directly, he does consider how cultural and social institutions which encouraged military and political policies furthering America's obsession with war.
- ¹⁴³ Davis Houck, *FDR and Fear Itself* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 11.
- ¹⁴⁴ Houck, *FDR and Fear Itself*, 10.
- ¹⁴⁵ Houck, *FDR and Fear Itself*, 10.
- ¹⁴⁶ Amos Kiewe, *FDR's First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 100; 99-120.
- ¹⁴⁷ Samuel I. Rosenman and Dorothy Rosenman, *Presidential Style: Some Giants and a Pigmy in the White House* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976), 335.
- ¹⁴⁸ Roosevelt, "On National Security."
- ¹⁴⁹ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On the Bank Crisis," March 12, 1933. Retrieved from

<http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/031233.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Edwin Black, "The Second Persona," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 2 (April 1970): 113.

¹⁵¹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 350. For a detailed discussion of the 1937-1938 Recession, see Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 350-361.

¹⁵² The Gallup Poll #118, April 6, 1938. Retrieved from

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0118&p=1>.

¹⁵³ The Gallup Poll #122, May 12, 1938. Retrieved from

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0122>.

¹⁵⁴ The Gallup Poll #155, April 19, 1939. Retrieved from

<http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0155>.

¹⁵⁵ Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Roles of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," *College Composition and Communication* 35, no. 2 (May 1984): 165-166.

¹⁵⁶ Ede and Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," 167.

¹⁵⁷ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁵⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On the European War," September 3, 1939. Retrieved from

<http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/090339.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁶⁰ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

¹⁶¹ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

¹⁶² Roosevelt, "On the European War."

¹⁶³ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

¹⁶⁴ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁶⁵ Black, "The Second Persona," 112.

¹⁶⁶ Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 2 (May 2004), 191.

¹⁶⁷ Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 194.

¹⁶⁸ Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 194.

¹⁶⁹ Asen begins his essay by critiquing those who consider citizenship strictly "as constituted in specific acts" without considering how citizenship proceeds on a daily, individual basis (190). He argues that we should consider "modes" of citizenship, or the ways everyday people enact citizenship. "A mode distinguishes the manner by which something is done from what is done" (194). Asen is more concerned with the motives behind specific acts rather than the actual act itself. These modes of citizenship may proceed in "potentially unruly" ways, in acts that "stand in tension with established authorities and institutions" (195). This is not to say, however, that so-called traditional acts of citizenship such as voting or local civic engagement do not "count"; instead, what matters is the way in which everyday citizens go about enacting civic participation in their individual lives and circumstances (190-191). As such, Asen's discourse theory of citizenship proves helpful when considering how Roosevelt invoked an audience in these "Fireside Chats." Although Roosevelt asked his audience to participate in specific acts (such as maintaining civilian morale through conversing with one's neighbors, working to produce military supplies for Great Britain, and rallying around his plans for national defense), he portrayed these acts as a reflection of a shared value and purpose: defending the United States from Germany and preventing the nation's involvement in the war in Europe. He called his audience to take action because of their shared sense of civic duty, with this spirit of national devotion constituting the "mode" by which these acts were carried out.

¹⁷⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency," May 27, 1941. Retrieved from

<http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052741.html>.

¹⁷¹ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."

¹⁷² Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 197.

¹⁷³ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁷⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency," May 27, 1941. Retrieved from

<http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052741.html>.

¹⁷⁵ Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 6.2.32. Retrieved from

<http://rhetoric.eserver.org/quintilian/6/chapter2.html#29>.

¹⁷⁶ Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, translated by John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 117.

¹⁷⁷ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁷⁸ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁷⁹ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 240.

¹⁸⁰ Bradford Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (February 2006), 5.

¹⁸¹ Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic," 6.

¹⁸² Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."

¹⁸³ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."

¹⁸⁴ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."

¹⁸⁵ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 284.

¹⁸⁶ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 325.

¹⁸⁷ Roosevelt, "On the European War." The phrase "my countrymen" does not appear in the official transcript of the speech on the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum. Roosevelt added the phrase at the last minute before delivering his "Fireside Chat." Reading Copy, "Radio Address of the President, September 3, 1939"; Folder: File No. 1240; Series 2: "You have nothing to fear but fear itself." FDR and the New Deal; Franklin D. Roosevelt – "The Great Communicator," The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945.

¹⁸⁸ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

¹⁸⁹ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

¹⁹⁰ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

¹⁹¹ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

¹⁹² Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁹³ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁹⁴ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁹⁵ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

¹⁹⁶ Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship," 197.

¹⁹⁷ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 316-17.

¹⁹⁸ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 317.

¹⁹⁹ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰⁰ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰¹ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰² Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰³ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰⁴ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰⁵ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

²⁰⁶ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

²⁰⁷ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

²⁰⁸ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 323.

²⁰⁹ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 225.

²¹⁰ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 638.

²¹¹ The Gallup Poll #232, March 7, 1941. Retrieved from

<http://institution.gallup.com.ezpl.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0232&p=2>.

²¹² Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 225.

²¹³ Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National Emergency."

²¹⁴ Henry Stimson notes on Draft No. 4, Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Announcing Unlimited National

Emergency,” May 27, 1941; Folder: Radio Address Announcing Unlimited National Emergency, May 27, 1941; Material for FDR Speeches and Messages: Speeches, December 29, 1940 – December 15, 1941; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

²¹⁵ Roosevelt, “On National Defense.”

²¹⁶ Samuel Gompers, “Labor’s Service to Freedom.” No date. Retrieved from the Library of Congress American Memory Project under “Samuel Gompers.”

²¹⁷ Gompers, “Labor’s Service to Freedom.”

²¹⁸ In this speech and many other addresses and letters to various labor leaders, Samuel Gompers attempted to persuade U.S. workers to support Wilson’s military buildup in 1917-1918. Many prominent labor institutions, including the needle trades unions, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Pennsylvania State Federation of labor all opposed U.S. involvement overseas, and labor strikes during this period threatened to derail U.S. production of military supplies and weapons. For more information, see Samuel Gompers, *The Samuel Gompers Papers, Vol. 10*, edited by Peter J. Albert and Grace Palladino (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007) and Elizabeth McKillen, “Integrating Labor into the Narrative of Wilsonian Internationalism: A Literature Review,” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 4 (September 2010): 642-662.

²¹⁹ “Labor Insert,” Draft No. 7, Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency,” May 27, 1941; Folder: Radio Address Announcing Unlimited National Emergency, May 27, 1941; Material for FDR Speeches and Messages: Speeches, December 29, 1940 – December 15, 1941; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

²²⁰ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²²¹ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²²² Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²²³ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 349.

²²⁴ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 321.

²²⁵ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”

²²⁶ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”

²²⁷ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”

²²⁸ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²²⁹ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²³⁰ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²³¹ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²³² Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

²³³ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 296.

²³⁴ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 321.

²³⁵ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 320-21.

²³⁶ Roosevelt, “On National Defense.”

²³⁷ Roosevelt, “On National Defense.”

²³⁸ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”

²³⁹ Roosevelt, “On the European War.”

²⁴⁰ Roosevelt, “On the European War.”

²⁴¹ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”

Chapter Three

²⁴² Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On National Defense,” May 26, 1940. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052640.html>.

²⁴³ Lawrence W. Levine and Cornelia R. Levine, *The People and the President: America’s Conversation with FDR* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 316-317.

²⁴⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On National Security,” December 29, 1940. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/122940.html>.

- ²⁴⁵ For my discussion of the America First Committee's rhetoric on Lend-Lease and its purpose as an organization, I draw heavily on Donald Walter Parson's unpublished dissertation, "The Rhetoric of Isolation: A Burkean Analysis of the America First Committee," for its exceptionally helpful collection of primary documents from the America First Committee Archives at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. See Donald Walter Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation: A Burkean Analysis of the America First Committee," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1968.
- ²⁴⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 427.
- ²⁴⁷ Woodrow Wilson, "War Message," April 2, 1917. Retrieved from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/wilsonwarmessage.htm>.
- ²⁴⁸ Wilson, "War Message."
- ²⁴⁹ George Washington, "Farewell Address," September 19, 1796. Retrieved from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp. Although Washington never delivered this address orally, it first appeared in the Philadelphia *Daily American Advertiser* on this date.
- ²⁵⁰ Thomas Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address," March 4, 1801. Retrieved from <http://www.princeton.edu/~tjpapers/inaugural/infinal.html>.
- ²⁵¹ James Monroe, "State of the Union Address," December 2, 1823. Retrieved from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/monroe.asp.
- ²⁵² Theodore Roosevelt, "Fourth Annual Message," December 6, 1904. Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29545#axzz1cCmACa2Q>.
- ²⁵³ Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 596; David M. Kennedy and Thomas Andrew Bailey, "A Latin American Protests (1943)," in *The American Spirit: Since 1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 199.
- ²⁵⁴ Roosevelt, "Fourth Annual Message."
- ²⁵⁵ Wilson, "War Message."
- ²⁵⁶ Wilson, "War Message"; Herbert George Wells, *The War That Will End War* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1914). Some attribute this quote to Wilson, but British columnist H.G. Wells was responsible for the phrase. Other U.S. presidents have used this phrase to describe World War I. For example, see John F. Kennedy, "Remarks at the Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery," November 11, 1961. Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8435>.
- ²⁵⁷ Woodrow Wilson, "The Fourteen Points," January 8, 1918. Retrieved from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/wilsonfourteenpoints.htm>.
- ²⁵⁸ Wilson, "The Fourteen Points."
- ²⁵⁹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 6-7.
- ²⁶⁰ Charles Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 5.
- ²⁶¹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 73.
- ²⁶² Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 386.
- ²⁶³ Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, 5.
- ²⁶⁴ The Gallup Poll #169, September 11, 1939. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0169>.
- ²⁶⁵ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 127.
- ²⁶⁶ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 276.
- ²⁶⁷ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 277.
- ²⁶⁸ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 281.
- ²⁶⁹ President Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On the European War," September 3, 1939. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/090339.html>.
- ²⁷⁰ Samuel I. Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 188-189.
- ²⁷¹ Roosevelt, "On the European War."
- ²⁷² Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 189.

- ²⁷³ Roosevelt, "On National Security."
- ²⁷⁴ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 260.
- ²⁷⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas," September 11, 1941. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/091141.html>.
- ²⁷⁶ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 259-260.
- ²⁷⁷ Samuel Rosenman and Dorothy Rosenman, *Presidential Style: Some Giants and a Pigmy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers: 1972), 378
- ²⁷⁸ As this project briefly addressed in chapter one, Roosevelt's campaign for reelection in 1940 also contributed to the rhetoric surrounding sending U.S. aid to Great Britain. Willkie openly supported repealing the Neutrality Laws and sending planes and tanks to the British. Although Roosevelt traded fifty destroyers to the British in September 1940, he did so without congressional approval and waited until after the election to introduce a full-fledged plan for U.S. military and economic aid to Great Britain. Because this project focuses specifically on Roosevelt's five pre-war "Fireside Chats," it does not discuss Roosevelt's campaign rhetoric during the summer and fall of 1940. In fact, Roosevelt did not declare his intention to seek a third term until July 1940, and thus did not deliver a "Fireside Chat" during his 1940 campaign for president. However, Roosevelt's 1940 campaign rhetoric did play a significant role of the U.S. public's perception of Roosevelt and U.S. involvement in the war. See, for example, Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 106-189; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 454-464.
- ²⁷⁹ For more information on the formation of America First, see Wayne Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), 3-34.
- ²⁸⁰ Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 1, 32.
- ²⁸¹ Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 2.
- ²⁸² Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 2.
- ²⁸³ "Beard Hits Intervening," *New York Times*, September 9, 1940, 7.
- ²⁸⁴ Charles Lindbergh remarks as printed in "War Choice Denied, Lindbergh Holds," *New York Times*, May 11, 1941, 31.
- ²⁸⁵ Secretary of the Navy William Knox remarks as quoted in "Knox Says We Wait Only on 'Forward,'" *New York Times*, May 13, 1941, 13.
- ²⁸⁶ Roosevelt, "On National Security."
- ²⁸⁷ Cole, *America First*, 40.
- ²⁸⁸ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 147; Cole, *America First*, 14.
- ²⁸⁹ "U.S.-British Ship Deal is Assailed and Commended," *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1940, 6.
- ²⁹⁰ Senator D. Worth Clark spoke on behalf of the America First Committee according to the America First Committee archives as quoted by Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 32; "U.S.-British Ship Deal is Assailed and Commended."
- ²⁹¹ Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 32; "U.S.-British Ship Deal is Assailed and Commended."
- ²⁹² Rosenman and Rosenman, *Presidential Style*, 380.
- ²⁹³ Albert Fried, *FDR and His Enemies* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 178.
- ²⁹⁴ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 47.
- ²⁹⁵ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 48.
- ²⁹⁶ Fried, *FDR and His Enemies*, 197; Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Press Conference," April 25, 1941. Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16107#axzz1bNugBUQV>.
- ²⁹⁷ Fried, *FDR and His Enemies*, 198.
- ²⁹⁸ Memo, Harry Hopkins to Steve Early, May 2, 1941; Folder: Lindbergh, Charles; Correspondence Le - McA, Papers of Steven Early; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- ²⁹⁹ Draft Letter, Herbert Swope to Harry Hopkins, April 29, 1941; Folder: Lindbergh, Charles; Correspondence Le - McA, Papers of Steven Early; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
- ³⁰⁰ Roosevelt, "On the European War."
- ³⁰¹ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 257.
- ³⁰² Roosevelt, "Press Conference," December 17, 1940. Retrieved from

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=15913&st=&st1#axzz1bYdemP3X>.

³⁰³ According to Robert Sherwood, one of Roosevelt's speechwriters, "the American people as a whole maintained the conviction that there couldn't be anything very radical or very dangerous in the President's proposal to lend our garden hose to the British who were fighting so heroically against such fearful odds." See Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 225.

³⁰⁴ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³⁰⁵ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³⁰⁶ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 46.

³⁰⁷ Burke, 46, 88.

³⁰⁸ Burke, 21.

³⁰⁹ Burke also discusses the importance of division and transformation to his theory of identification. Once an audience has been presented with shared "interests" or "choices," Burke asserts that they must "confront the implications of *division*" within identification, for if "men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity" (43). Once the speaker/audience deal with this division, Burke states that the rhetor must provide a means of transcendence or transformation from the elements of division (46, 22). This "motive" must "*serve as ground for both these* choices, a motive that, while not being exactly either one or the other, can ambiguously contain them both. A term serving as ground for both these terms would, by the same token, 'transcend' them" (10-11). When an audience recognizes the inherent division presented by identifying with a certain argument, they will undergo a type of transformation, "a development *from* one order of motives *to* another" (11). Although Roosevelt sought to identify with his audience numerous times in these "Fireside Chats," it would be unfair to state that he attempted to divide his audience in these radio addresses. Instead, he chose to focus on common elements of agreement, most importantly the shared desire of his audience to stay out of war. When Roosevelt spoke of ideas/groups that threatened to divide the nation (those who said that the European war would not threaten the United States, for example), he did not attack them as unpatriotic. Instead, he pardoned those citizens "who closed their eyes, from lack of interest or lack of knowledge; honestly and sincerely thinking" that the European war would not impact the nation (Roosevelt, "On National Security"). By attributing this belief to "lack of knowledge" instead of an intentional choice to divide the country, Roosevelt provided a way for these citizens to move towards his plan for sending aid to Great Britain. A future project could discuss the America First Committee (AFC) using Burke's idea of identification/division/transformation since the AFC intentionally tried to divide the U.S. public from Roosevelt in an attempt to convince them that the president was taking intentional steps to involve the country in war. However, because the focus of this project is Roosevelt's rhetoric in his five pre-war "Fireside Chats," I have limited my inclusion of Burke to his theory of identification.

³¹⁰ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 46.

³¹¹ James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), 205.

³¹² Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

³¹³ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

³¹⁴ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

³¹⁵ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

³¹⁶ Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, 205; Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 27.

³¹⁷ Robert E. Wood to Mrs. A. G. Sims, May 21, 1941, Letter, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 40.

³¹⁸ Hormel to Stewart, October 30, 1941, Letter, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 59-60.

³¹⁹ Hamilton Fish, "Americanism vs. Internationalism," Radio Address, March 2, 1941, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 160.

³²⁰ Philip LaFollette, "Address," November 1, 1941, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 160.

³²¹ Roger Butterfield, "Lindbergh," *Life*, August 11, 1941, 70, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 160.

³²² Charles Lindbergh, "Government by Representation or Subterfuge," August 9, 1941, as quoted in

Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 164.

³²³ Robert F. Jones, "Should the U.S. Give Lend-Lease Aid to Russia," Radio Address, August 29, 1941, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 162-163.

³²⁴ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Four Freedoms," January 6, 1941. Retrieved from <http://americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrthefourfreedoms.htm>.

³²⁵ Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt*, 265.

³²⁶ General Hugh Johnson, "Address," Radio Address, February 6, 1941, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 158.

³²⁷ Speaker's Bureau form telegrams sent to all chapters against H.R. 1776, no date, America First Papers, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 158-159.

³²⁸ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

³²⁹ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³³⁰ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

³³¹ Roosevelt, "On the European War."

³³² *The Battle of 1776: The Government's Case for the Lend-Lease Bill* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941).

³³³ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³³⁴ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³³⁵ Washington, "Farewell Address"; Jefferson, "First Inaugural Address."

³³⁶ Martin Dies, "Insidious Wiles of Foreign Influence," no date, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 48.

³³⁷ John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," 1630. Retrieved from <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html>.

³³⁸ Wilbur Helm, "A Study of the Words America and First," Radio Address, no date, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 47.

³³⁹ Dies, "Insidious Wiles of Foreign Influence."

³⁴⁰ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³⁴¹ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³⁴² Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

³⁴³ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

³⁴⁴ Roosevelt, "On National Defense."

³⁴⁵ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³⁴⁶ Roosevelt, "On National Security."

³⁴⁷ For list of America First Committee members who were also U.S. Senators or Representatives, see Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 32.

³⁴⁸ "Wheeler Sees Us 'Rushing' into War," *New York Times*, April 28, 1941, 10.

³⁴⁹ General Robert E. Wood, remarks as printed in "Urges Decision on Entry," *New York Times*, July 8, 1941, 17.

³⁵⁰ Clay Judson to Robert Wood, September 24, 1940, Letter, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 91.

³⁵¹ For a listing of U.S. Senators and Representatives who spoke for America First, see Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 32.

³⁵² Representative James O'Connor (D-MT), testimony on H.R. 1776, as quoted in Beard, "President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War," 58.

³⁵³ Representative Gerald Landis (R-IN), testimony on H.R. 1776, as quoted in Beard, "President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War," 61-62.

³⁵⁴ Philip LaFollette as quoted in "P. LaFollette Hits Roosevelt on War," *New York Times*, January 6, 1941, 4.

³⁵⁵ Philip LaFollette, "Address," November 1, 1941, as quoted in Parson, "The Rhetoric of Isolation," 153.

³⁵⁶ The Gallup Poll #248, September 17, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0248&p=2>.

- ³⁵⁷ Roosevelt, "On National Security."
³⁵⁸ Roosevelt, "On National Security."
³⁵⁹ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 319.
³⁶⁰ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 339.
³⁶¹ The Gallup Poll #227, December 31, 1940. Retrieved from
<http://institution.gallup.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0227>.
³⁶² Roosevelt, "On National Security."

Chapter Four

- ³⁶³ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas," September 11, 1941. Retrieved from
<http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/091141.html>.
³⁶⁴ Staff of the Roosevelt Library, "More About the President's Naval Collection," Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum Website. Retrieved from
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections/photosnaval.html>.
³⁶⁵ Samuel Rosenman and Dorothy Rosenman, *Presidential Style: Some Giants and a Pigmy* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers: 1972), 267.
³⁶⁶ Rosenman and Rosenman, *Presidential Style*, 268.
³⁶⁷ Rosenman and Rosenman, *Presidential Style*, 276.
³⁶⁸ Rosenman and Rosenman, *Presidential Style*, 276-277.
³⁶⁹ Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 221.
³⁷⁰ Please see pages 25-27 of this thesis.
³⁷¹ "Accuse President," *New York Times*, September 7, 1941, 1; Folder: Fireside Chat on National Defense, September 11, 1941; Materials for FDR Speeches and Messages; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
³⁷² "Our Ship Called Aggressor," *New York Times*, September 7, 1941, 5. Folder: Fireside Chat on National Defense, September 11, 1941; Materials for FDR Speeches and Messages; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
³⁷³ "Submarine Attacks U.S. Destroyer Greer," *New York Times*, September 5, 1941, 1.
³⁷⁴ See "British Airmen Helped Repel Attack, Greer's Officers Say," *New York Times*, September 6, 1941, 1; "Accuse President" and "No Attack on Greer," *New York Times*, September 7, 1941, 1; Frank L. Kluckhohn, "President Postpones His Address on World Crisis to Thursday Night," *New York Times*, September 8, 1941, 1; "The International Situation," *New York Times*, September 9, 1941, 1; "The International Situation," *New York Times*, September 10, 1941, 1; "Congress is Called," *New York Times*, September 11, 1941, 1.
³⁷⁵ Frank L. Kluckhohn, "World Significance is Attached to Radio Talk Following the Admission by Berlin of a Clash at Sea," *New York Times*, September 7, 1941, 1.
³⁷⁶ "The International Situation," *New York Times*, September 10, 1941, 1.
³⁷⁷ James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom: 1940-1945* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1970), 139.
³⁷⁸ State Department Draft of Franklin D. Roosevelt's September 11, 1941, "Fireside Chat"; Folder: Fireside Chat on National Defense, September 11, 1941; Materials for FDR Speeches and Messages; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
³⁷⁹ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."
³⁸⁰ Folder: Fireside Chat on National Defense, September 11, 1941; Materials for FDR Speeches and Messages; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
³⁸¹ Undated / Unnumbered Pages, Draft of Franklin D. Roosevelt's September 11, 1941, "Fireside Chat"; Folder: Fireside Chat on National Defense, September 11, 1941; Materials for FDR Speeches and Messages; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
³⁸² "Insert D, New Draft," Draft of Franklin D. Roosevelt's September 11, 1941, "Fireside Chat"; Folder:

Fireside Chat on National Defense, September 11, 1941; Materials for FDR Speeches and Messages; Papers of Samuel I. Rosenman; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

³⁸³ Charles Beard details the congressional investigation that followed Roosevelt's September 11, 1941, "Fireside Chat," giving particular attention to U.S. Navy Admiral Harold R. Stark's testimony to the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs. See Charles Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 140-142.

³⁸⁴ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas." See also Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, 101.

³⁸⁵ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

³⁸⁶ Roosevelt would ask the U.S. Congress to repeal portions of the neutrality acts that prohibited U.S. merchant ships from being armed in October 1941. The legislation finally passed the U.S. Senate on November 8, 1941. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 282-283.

³⁸⁷ Steven Casey, *Cautious Crusade: Franklin D. Roosevelt, American Public Opinion, and the War Against Nazi Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

³⁸⁸ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 277.

³⁸⁹ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 496. See also Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), 705-706.

³⁹⁰ Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, 139.

³⁹¹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 496.

³⁹² Francis L. Loewenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas, eds., *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence* (New York: Saturday Review Press / E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1975), 156-157.

³⁹³ Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, 139.

³⁹⁴ Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, 141.

³⁹⁵ Joseph E. Perisco, *Roosevelt's Secret War: FDR and World War II Espionage* (New York: Random House, 2001), 125.

³⁹⁶ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

³⁹⁷ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

³⁹⁸ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

³⁹⁹ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴⁰⁰ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

⁴⁰¹ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴⁰² Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴⁰³ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴⁰⁴ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴⁰⁵ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

⁴⁰⁶ See Chapter 2 of this thesis for further discussion.

⁴⁰⁷ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴⁰⁸ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

⁴⁰⁹ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴¹⁰ Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 234.

⁴¹¹ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴¹² Campbell and Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency*, 221.

⁴¹³ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴¹⁴ Roosevelt, "On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas."

⁴¹⁵ Lawrence W. Levine and Cornelia R. Levine, *The People and the President: America's Conversation with FDR* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 390.

⁴¹⁶ *New York Times*, September 12, 1941, 1.

- ⁴¹⁷ “Two Presidents Cited,” *Boston Globe* as printed in the *New York Times*, September 12, 1941, 3.
- ⁴¹⁸ “The Navy’s Guns,” *New York Times*, September 12, 1941, 20.
- ⁴¹⁹ The Gallup Poll #248, September 17, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0248>.
- ⁴²⁰ Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, 142.
- ⁴²¹ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 383.
- ⁴²² Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 385.
- ⁴²³ Roosevelt, “On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas.”
- ⁴²⁴ Roosevelt, “On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas.”
- ⁴²⁵ Although Roosevelt directed his “war rhetoric” towards Germany following the U.S.S. *Greer* incident, the historical irony is that it was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and not a German sinking of a U.S. merchant ship, that led Roosevelt to declare war on Japan and, as a result, resulted in Germany’s declaration of war on the United States in December 1941. Roosevelt’s focus on Germany (and not Japan) in these pre-war “Fireside Chats” reveals how he viewed the Japanese threat (or lack thereof) to the United States. For further discussion, see pages 151-152 of this thesis.

Chapter Five

- ⁴²⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency,” May 27, 1941. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052741.html>.
- ⁴²⁷ Lawrence W. Levine and Cornelia R. Levine, *The People and the President: America’s Conversation with FDR* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 373.
- ⁴²⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas,” September 11, 1941. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/091141.html>.
- ⁴²⁹ Grace Tully, *F.D.R.: My Boss* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1949), 88.
- ⁴³⁰ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On National Defense,” May 26, 1940. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/052640.html>.
- ⁴³¹ President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On the European War,” September 3, 1939. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/090339.html>.
- ⁴³² Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 276.
- ⁴³³ The Gallup Poll #169, September 11, 1939. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0169>.
- ⁴³⁴ The Gallup Poll #248, September 17, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0248>.
- ⁴³⁵ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, ix.
- ⁴³⁶ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 329.
- ⁴³⁷ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 330.
- ⁴³⁸ For more information on the discrimination against African Americans in the armed forces, see Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1994), 165-167, 421-444, 565-568, and 626-627.
- ⁴³⁹ William E Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Barack Obama* 4th ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 113.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR*, 189.
- ⁴⁴¹ Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR*, 300.
- ⁴⁴² Roosevelt, “On National Security.”
- ⁴⁴³ President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “On the European War,” September 3, 1939. Retrieved from <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/090339.html>.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Roosevelt, “On National Defense.”
- ⁴⁴⁵ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”
- ⁴⁴⁶ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”
- ⁴⁴⁷ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

⁴⁴⁸ Roosevelt, “On Maintaining Freedom of the Seas.”

⁴⁴⁹ Roosevelt, “On National Defense.”

⁴⁵⁰ Roosevelt, “Announcing Unlimited National Emergency.”

⁴⁵¹ Roosevelt, “On the European War.”

⁴⁵² Roosevelt, “On National Defense.”

⁴⁵³ Roosevelt, “On the European War.”

⁴⁵⁴ Part of the issue surrounding these negotiations is the United States’ racist treatment of the Japanese prior to and during the 1940-1941 negotiations. During his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt warned that the United States must treat the “Japanese in a spirit of all possible courtesy, and with generosity and justice . . . if we show that we regard the Japanese as an inferior and alien race, and try to treat them as we have treated the Chinese; and if at the same time we fail to keep our navy at the highest point of efficiency and size—they we shall invite disaster.” Roosevelt was particularly concerned with a Japanese attack on Hawaii, the newly declared U.S. territory. See Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 397.

⁴⁵⁵ The Gallup Poll #213, September 30, 1940. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0213>.

⁴⁵⁶ The Gallup Poll #230, February 14, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0230>.

⁴⁵⁷ The Gallup Poll #254, November 25, 1941. Retrieved from <http://institution.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=AIPO0254>.

⁴⁵⁸ I am grateful to my colleague Sharon Park for her helpful insight into Roosevelt’s “silence” on Japan.

⁴⁵⁹ Saul Bellow, “In the Days of Mr. Roosevelt,” in *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future* (New York: Viking, 1994), p. 28-29.

⁴⁶⁰ Roosevelt, “On National Security.”

⁴⁶¹ Levine and Levine, *The People and the President*, 284.

⁴⁶² Roosevelt, “On National Security.”